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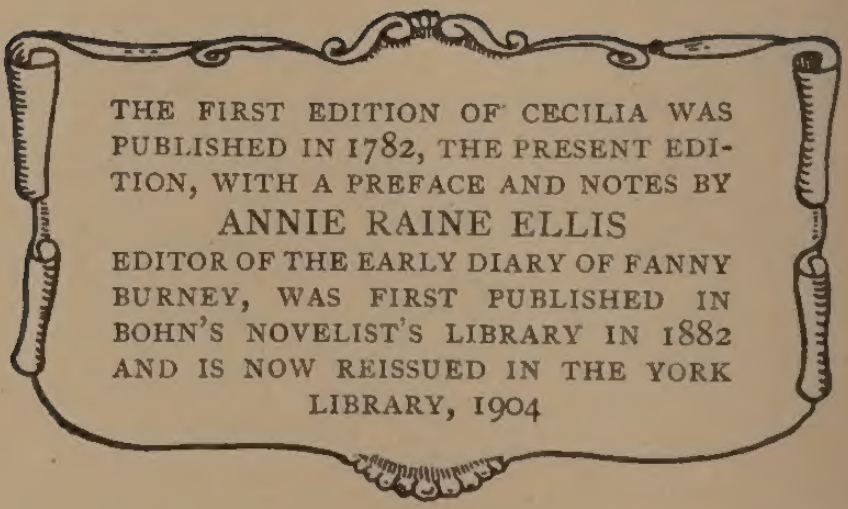
CECILIA

VOL. I



THE FIRST EDITION OF CECILIA WAS PUBLISHED IN 1782, THE PRESENT EDITION, WITH A PREFACE AND NOTES BY

ANNIE RAINE ELLIS

EDITOR OF THE EARLY DIARY OF FANNY BURNEY, WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN BOHN'S NOVELIST'S LIBRARY IN 1882 AND IS NOW REISSUED IN THE YORK LIBRARY, 1904

CECILIA

OR

MEMOIRS OF AN HEIRESS

BY

FANNY BURNEY

VOL. I

LONDON
GEORGE BELL AND SONS
1904

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A PREFACE.

"IT was not 'hard fagging' that produced such a work as 'Evelina'! *It* was the ebullition of true, sterling genius.—*You wrote it because you could not help it—it came, and you put it down on paper.*"

These words of Mr. Crisp, the fatherlike friend of Miss Burney, bear true witness to the joyous and spontaneous impulse which produced 'Evelina.' That novel has a girlish, artless story. The only contrivance in it,—that of a letter going astray,—is almost clumsy; and the incidents of a deserted wife, a disowned marriage, and a change of babies by a nurse, must have been nearly as well-worn in 1778, as a fever, a raving scene, and an absence in the West Indies on the part of a husband, or a father, when he was most needed at home, were to become in the fifty years following.

'Evelina' has an affecting situation, which stands in stead of a good plot. 'Cecilia' has both an elaborate plot, and a striking situation.

The stage-word, *situation*, is not inapt for use towards a book composed so much after the manner of the theatre that Mrs. Siddons told Miss Burney there was no part which she had ever so much wished to act as that of 'Cecilia.'

It is probable that reading and seeing plays had much more influence upon Miss Burney's method of construction than reading novels. We are not sure that she had read those of Richardson all through; and we know that she only picked her way among pages of Fielding. Playbooks were then much more numerous than novels; and, for the most part, much more interesting and diverting. Those who have inherited libraries formed in the last century, know how large a share in them is held by the dramatists. A hundred years ago, the new plays were as our new novels; and more than they are.

'Evelina' contains characters so lively, and scenes so diverting, that both Sheridan and Murphy thought Miss Burney sure to succeed in a comedy. She wrote one, but her father and Mr. Crisp withheld it from the stage. From it, she took the name of her next heroine, "Cecilia," and the incident of a loss of fortune.

It has been said that in Art, the time best employed is that which is lost. The four years and a half between the bringing out of 'Evelina' and that of 'Cecilia' were spent by Miss Burney "at school, the great school of the world, where swarms of new ideas and characters continually presented themselves before her."[1] The "blue parties," the "*ton* parties," the "company at Bath, Brighthelmstone, and Tunbridge-Wells;" the "good talk"[2] in the library at Streatham; all ministered to the enlarging and ripening of her faculties.

'Cecilia' is plainly the work of mature power, used to maintain and increase a reputation already so high that a weight is on the writer to be worthy of it. 'Evelina' stole into print, and if no one had praised it, little would have been suffered, but "a thousand million of fears for her book" troubled Frances Burney when she thought of the hundreds waiting for the publication of 'Cecilia.'

'Cecilia' was written partly in the house of Mr. Crisp, at Chesington,[3] partly in that of Dr. Burney in St. Martin's Street, but always as if in the presence of Dr. Johnson. Though he never saw the manuscript, he prevails throughout the book. Not merely his balance of words, and of the clauses of sentences, but his way of balancing thoughts, is

[1] Mr. Crisp.

[2] "Sir, we had good talk"—*Dr. Johnson to Boswell.*

[3] The picturesque manor-house of Chesington is, we are told, destroyed; some notice of it may be found in the 'Life of Dr Burney.' Dr. Burney lived in what his daughter called "the vulgarly-peopled St. Martin's Street." "Next door" (writes J. T. Smith, author of 'Nollekens and his Times') "to Orange Street Chapel, where I have frequently heard Mr. Toplady preach; and in the very house now standing, No. 36, in which Sir Isaac Newton lived, whose observatory still remains above the attics." This was written in 1829. We are told that two rooms, at least, of this house, namely, the study and the library of Sir Isaac Newton, are now parts of Bertolini's Hotel, at the corner of Orange Street.

often imitated. Characters from the Rambler sometimes seem to be put in action, and there is an even too obvious desire to be of moral use.

The novel of 'Cecilia' has far more expanse than that of 'Evelina.' It presents, not unworthily, some scenes of the great *Comédie Humaine*. Her fertility of invention drew Miss Burney into a redundance, which may be blamed, of characters, incidents, and "situations;" yet we know that the original manuscript was compressed in the copying.

The pivot on which the story turns is the clause in her uncle's will, by which the future husband of Cecilia must take her name, or forfeit her fortune. When the book came out, there was hot debate as to whether, or not, this change from a noble, to a respectable, name, was enough to provoke such proud resistance. One Bishop, at least, grew warm while discussing this point, though Deans might have felt more concern in it, since the uncle of 'Cecilia' was a Dean.[1] Miss Burney was proud to hear that a nobleman, who had given proof of the goodness of his heart by weeping over the troubles of Delvile and Cecilia, had declared that the change of an old name for a great fortune was a thing not to be done. She turned this opinion into a weapon of argument against her father and Mr. Crisp, who had thought it unlikely that any one would prefer a family-name to three thousand a year. As Lord de Ferrars was not merely an expert, but shared with Mr. Delvile the noble name of Compton, we may leave this *nodus* of the drama as he left it.

It is probable that some instance of this kind of restraint of marriage was fresh in the mind of Miss Burney when she wrote 'Cecilia.' She wished to express her dislike of what, with an unconscious Hellenism, she called "these *name-compelling* wills."

[1] When 'Alton Locke' was published, there was a humorous debate between the Deans of Ely (Peacock), and of Peterborough (Butler), as to which of them was the Dean in that novel. This was in spite of Kingsley's having made special provision against his fen-town of D—— being taken for Lincoln, Ely, or Peterborough. Cecilia's uncle must have been Dean of Norwich, or of Ely; if we are to take things in so prosaic a manner as to insist upon the places and people in works of fancy having more than a *nominal* existence.

She has told us, in telling Mr. Crisp, that "the conflict-scene between mother and son" was the point in her book to which all previous lines tended, the chapter for which all the rest were written. She defends it against her kind critic. If it must be expunged, she would rather there were no book at all.

This scene is an ambitious effort. A hundred years ago it was harrowing, now it is teasing. It will shatter no nerves now, nor mar the night's rest of even the most tender of readers. There could not have been more ado, nor finer phrases used, if it had been an eighteenth century recital of the great struggle of feeling and honour in the hearts of Donna Ximena and the Cid. Mrs. Delvile flings fine words about at random. "Rectitude," "duty," "honour," "fame," "wronged ancestors," "shame and reproach," "insulted dignity," are all employed about the mere change of name from Delvile to Beverley. Her son is menaced with "the censure of mankind, the renunciation of his family, and the curses of his father." If Miss Burney meant to draw a violent, unreasonable woman, with a confused mind, she succeeded. She herself seems to have had confused notions concerning the right of parents to control, or forbid, the marriages of their children.

Richardson, before her, had magnified the rights of parents to an outrageous excess. "There wanders over the world," wrote Dr. Johnson, "a wild notion, which extends over marriage more than over any other transaction. The parent's moral right can arise only from his kindness, and his civil right only from his money."

Cecilia owes nothing but courtesy to Mrs. Delvile; nothing but a few more months of deference to her guardian, Mr. Delvile. She is not only treated like a culprit by both of them, but she feels and admits herself to be a criminal, because she has disobeyed parents who are not her own. Fifteen years later, Miss Austen, in that delightful book, the name of which is taken from some words in 'Cecilia,'[1] described an interview between a sensible and spirited heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, and an angry woman, bent on

[1] "The whole of this unfortunate business," said Dr. Lyster, "has been the result of PRIDE and PREJUDICE."

breaking off her nephew's supposed engagement with Elizabeth. Lady Catherine de Burgh is more openly insolent than Mrs. Delvile, and without her direct claim to authority, but there are so many analogies between the scene in 'Pride and Prejudice,' and that in 'Cecilia,' that as we read one, we think of the other.[1] Miss Austen, whose first manner it was to make gay mockery of what she saw to be high-flown in other writers, set herself, we think with intention, to show how a Mrs. Delvile, or a Lady Catherine, would have wheedled, or scolded, to no purpose; got into her carriage, and gone away in a rage; forwarding, instead of hindering, the happy marriage, which it is the aim of three, as it used to be of five, volumes to delay. Miss Burney wrote from herself. Cecilia, like Miss Burney, is sensitive. She shrinks from the blame of others. She fears the reproaches of her own tender conscience. Her self-respect, and the esteem of the esteemed, make up what is called her "dignity." We are told too much of her "dignity." Very subordinate to that is any sense on the part of Miss Burney of what is due to Delvile. Dr. Johnson said of his own wife, "she had read the old romances, and thought a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog!" There is some faint reflection of this old manner of treatment in the contrast between the highly wrought feelings of Delvile, and the slight regard paid to them by his mother and Cecilia.

It is often the case that characters of which the author thinks he has firm hold, are made less life-like to the reader than others of which the author feels he has a slighter grasp. What is palpable to himself must be palpable to all. Thus smaller pains are taken, and the reader sees only a flat outline, or colour without form.

[1] "During this preparatory period her mind seems to have been working in a very different direction from that into which it ultimately settled. Instead of presenting faithful copies of Nature, her tales were generally burlesques, ridiculing the improbable events and exaggerated sentiments which she had met with in sundry silly romances. Something of this fancy is to be found in 'Northanger Abbey,' but she soon left it far behind in her subsequent course. It would seem as if she were first taking note of all the faults to be avoided, and curiously considering how she ought *not* to write before she attempted to put forth her strength in the right direction."—*A Memoir of Jane Austen, by the Rev. J. A. Leigh.*

To Miss Burney, Mr. Delvile was a man she hated: Mrs. Delvile a woman whom she loved and excused.

Some traits of the Delvile pride may have been gleaned from the character of Fulke Greville, an exacting patron of Dr. Burney, and grandfather of that Greville who has left us a diary, written as if to show how much the standard of English gentlemen has been lowered since Fulke Greville and Philip Sidney were boys together at Shrewsbury School.

We are often told that Mrs. Delvile is noble, dignified, and elegant,[1] in feeling and manner. Mrs. Thrale, looking up from the pages of 'Cecilia' to the portrait of her own mother, a Cotton of Combermere, who had wrangled much with Dr. Johnson, saw a strong likeness between her mother's character and that of Mrs. Delvile. Therefore, to Mrs. Thrale, Mrs. Delvile was not so vapourous and ill-defined as she may seem to many.

We began this preface under the impression that Miss Burney was too timid by nature, and too "cautious by habit,"[2] to copy characters from life. It was true that we had found her making use of some traits of Dr. Johnson's abstraction when engrossed by a book, to give colour to the character of a pedant, in 'Camilla.' She had most likely been told of those traits by Mrs. Thrale, as they are among the 'Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson,' in the "Bozzy and Piozzi" book. It was true that Thomas Lowndes, who published 'Evelina,' was supposed to have been drawn as Briggs, but this seemed unlikely, as Miss Burney never saw him but once, when she went *incognita* to his shop to hear what he had to say on 'Evelina.' It appeared more probable that when she described the versatile and impulsive Belfield, she had in her mind the poetaster, Percival Stockdale, who fills thirteen pages of small print in Nichols' 'Literary Anecdotes of the

[1] Dr. Johnson thus explains "ELEGANCY, the beauty of propriety, not of greatness." "ELEGANT, 1. Pleasing by minuter beauties. 2. Nice, not coarse, or gross." We think that Miss Burney uses the word "elegant," to express refinement, especially of manner. In her Diary, she writes that "the King and Queen addressed Mr. Delany even with elegance." "Spirit," which is ascribed to young Delvile, seems to be used for *animation*. He is contrasted with the languid youths of fashion.

[2] Mrs. Thrale wrote thus of Dr. Burney.

Eighteenth Century,' but has no place in man's memory. Belfield is endowed with "spirit," and with "genius"—his many changes of the way in which he earns, or does not earn, his bread, do not lower him in the opinion of the generous Cecilia, or of the warm-hearted Delvile, who divide between them nearly all the virtue in this novel which is united with perfect sanity of mind. She may be said to have ennobled the character and conduct of the "Stocky" of Dr. Johnson, so that even his egregious vanity could not well be wounded. But on opening, without a thought of her, that most diverting book, Smith's 'Nollekens and his Times,' it was forced on us that she meant to draw, or, as "little Nolly" would himself have said, "to *sculpt*," Nollekens as Briggs. Trait for trait he is here—with his good-humour, his simplicity, his utter want of respect for persons of rank, with his open meanness, the candour of his stinginess, and his elaborate and minute plans to save and amass money. It was a daring deed—Did Dr. Burney connive at it? Was Dr. Johnson mischievous enough to suggest it? Both knew "Nolly" well. His wife's father was one of Dr. Johnson's best friends, and Mrs. Nollekens—a greater miser than even her husband—is said to have been Pekuah in 'Rasselas.'

Briggs is no caricature of Nollekens, but to take a miser, barely English, the son of an Antwerp miser, and make him out to be a "warm man" in the City of London, was enough to make readers in 1782 consider Briggs a caricature, and to leave in the mind of a reader in 1882 a strong sense of unfitness, which is explained if we believe Briggs to have been lifted out of one set of circumstances, and pushed into another set, to suit the plan of this novel.

There was a time in her life when Miss Burney seems to have put some trust in the elegant addresses of a sentimental widower, a grandson of Sir Stephen Fox, and a brother of that Dean of Durham [1] who had been of Selwyn's breakfast parties to see unhappy men hanged by the neck until they were dead.

Colonel Digby,[2] with that delicate desire to be trusted

[1] This was before his promotion. George Selwyn called him his (Newgate) "Ordinary."

[2] See note 1, p. 169, vol. ii. We think that we have found, in Madame

which often marks the untrustworthy, censured Cecilia's want of confidence in her lover, and her abrupt withdrawal from him after the interruption of their marriage. Miss Burney assured him that she herself would have acted as she had made Cecilia act. Many a timid maiden might agree with her, yet there is something harsh in the conduct of Cecilia. It may also be doubted whether any clergyman would have heeded the unsupported objection of an unknown woman who escaped as she spoke.

Mr. Windham hinted blame of the redundance of trials and troubles which afflict the hero and heroine, after readers have become thoroughly interested in their fate. Burke told Miss Burney that he wished the end to have been "either more happy, or more miserable; for that in a work of imagination there was no medium."[1]

Every one, we think, must feel that the aftermath of misery in the last book of 'Cecilia,' might as well have been spared the tender and "elegant" readers of 1782,—from Mrs. Chapone, whose nerves were shattered even to the loss of sleep for a week, to the Duchess of Portland and Mrs. Delany, who thrice wept their way through the five volumes. The readers of 1882, are a less simple folk, and need no shelter for their nerves. Those who are critics may observe that these very last troubles were probably made to crop up that Miss Burney might describe the language and actions of a delirious person. She repeated this ambitious effort towards the end of her third novel, 'Camilla.'

Burke did not like what Miss Burney calls "Morrice's part in the Pantheon." Most likely he thought that the upsetting of a commonplace tea-pot by an impertinent

D'Arblay's 'Camilla,' one shaft aimed at this Colonel Digby. "If you would avoid deceit and treachery, look at a man as at a picture, which tells you only the present moment! Rely upon nothing of time to come! They are not like us, and they think themselves free, if they have made no verbal profession; though they may have pledged themselves by looks, by actions, by attentions, a thousand and a thousand times!"

[1] "I was not easy enough to answer him, or I have much, though perhaps not good for much, to say in defence of following life and nature as much in the conclusion as in the progress of a tale; and when is life and nature completely happy or miserable?"—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, p. 195, vol. ii.

meddler, too mean a way of surprising a hero of any magnitude into a burst of tender concern for a heroine of any dignity. Dr. Moore thought well enough of this incident to repeat it, with some slight changes, in his forgotten novel, 'Edward.'

It may be doubted if sayings or doings such as those of Morrice and Mrs. Belfield should be so closely copied from Nature as to stir in us the same feelings of irritation which they would excite in real life. To tease, or worry, is a poor aim of fiction. More or less unconsciously, Miss Burney has made much of this book an expression of her own very strong feeling of the hindrance of gentle and pleasant ways of life by the impertinent, the tiresome, the meddling, and the perverse.

The gambling of that time could hardly be exaggerated. It was the *ton* to play at Commerce with a thousand guineas in the pool. This was mere play in drawing-rooms, and nothing to the serious play which was carried on at Brooks's. There was many a tragedy like that of Harrel. Surely all that leads up to his end, and the chapter which completes it, are the finest parts of this book. In the self-importance of Mr. Hobson, and the servility of Mr. Simkins, amid the awful merriment in the box at Vauxhall, there is something not unlike the great dramatists of the sixteenth century.

It is true that if the construction of the plot were very closely examined, many improbable details might be found; but it is a serviceable plot for bringing in fine things.[1] A critical reader cannot but discern, and admire, the skill with which the author has chosen and marshalled her characters, the wide and complex framework in which she has arranged them, her spirit, vivacity, and readiness of resource. What is wanting in her characters has been so well shown by Macaulay,[2] that it need not be dwelt on here.

[1] "Bayes. What is the plot good for, but to bring in fine things?" —*The Rehearsal, Act iii. Scene* 1.

[2] Macaulay threw his warm heart into his 'Essay' on Madame D'Arblay. It has some oversights, but they are almost too trifling to be named. It is marvellous that his rapid eye did not mis-read, or miss, more on her printed pages than was the case. One very minute statement we must correct: Macaulay says that Miss Burney never got the gown which Mrs. Schwellenberg offered her (on the part of the Queen), in a manner totally devoid of "softness and elegance." Miss Burney

To us, her contrivances for throwing odd people together are too obvious, and too often repeated. We soon learn to expect them. We know that if Cecilia visits Miss Belfield, one or other Mr. Delvile is sure to surprise her; when Morrice skips on the stage, it is to disturb the actors, or derange the scenery; if Miss Larolles is flighty, or Mrs. Harrel heedless, or Sir Robert insolent, the voice of Albany is sure to come from a corner. In real life no Cecilia would a second time have heard Mrs. Belfield recommend her son; Morrice would have found most doors shut in his face; and Albany, none open to him.

Though Mr. Briggs is caricatured, we have seen tears of laughter shed over Mr. Briggs; we have also heard a person whom the gods had not made humorous, say that Mr. Hobson was "not a half bad sort of man." Hobson, Simkins, and Mrs. Belfield are excellently drawn.

The "*ton* parties" gave so much pleasure to Mrs. Thrale that we may trust them as faithful transcripts of the affectations of 1779. Those who are curious concerning the antiquities of slang may learn that the "*maccaronies*" of 1779, who were soon to be followed by the "jolly young bucks" of 1796, called the dull, and the wise alike, "quizzes," or "quozzes," "bores," "frumps," and "fogramites," that morality was with them "fogrum stuff," and that they "smoked" people before "roasting" them. When an old lady could be described as a "limping old puddle," and coarse, unfeeling mockery be made, almost within their sight and hearing, of the decrepit, or deformed, we know how much need there was of formal manners to protect the weak and aged from the grossness still prevailing. Lady Honoria is not merely flippant, but coarse, both in thought and speech. The tales which she tells her aunt of her aunt's own son, before Cecilia, would, at least, have been kept to herself by any girl born after 1800, for fear of the disgust she would excite, and the reproofs she would incur. In her Diary, Miss Burney compares the wife of Sir Borlase Warren with Lady Honoria, not as to coarseness, but as to thoughtlessness. Lady Honoria is a "Rattle" of

did get what she calls her "memorable present gown" (a lilac tabby), and wore it on the twenty-first birthday of the Princess Royal, the 29th of September, 1786.

rank. Another "Rattle," Miss Larolles, cries "Lord," as freely as a French peasant would say "*Dame*," (our Lady,) and with about as little meaning.

In 'Pride and Prejudice,' such ejaculations have gone down to Lydia Bennet; in 'Sense and Sensibility,' to the vulgar Mrs. Jennings; still, this careless use of sacred words lasted long in what was called "the best company." Miss Martineau tells us that Miss Berry swore. Miss Martineau was so deaf, that we think she mistook Miss Berry's foreign "my God," (*mon Dieu*,) for an oath worthy of Queen Bess.

The languid dandies, whom Miss Burney calls the "*fades macaronies*," still exist, under newer names, and still take the trouble to be weary of everything. Many little details of the dress and demeanour of 1779 may be gleaned from this book, after we have gathered in the mass that may be learned as to what manner of story stirred our forefathers to merriment, or to sadness; what kind of conduct they blamed, or admired, when at their best.

Among the legends which cluster round the name of Frances Burney, there is one, often repeated in print, that she received two thousand pounds, or guineas, for the copyright of 'Cecilia.' We should be little surprised to learn that she received less than one thousand. The price paid for the copyright was no secret at the time; Burke blamed her for parting with it for too small a sum. Hence seems to have arisen his desire to see her books published by subscription, which was afterwards done, in the case of 'Camilla.' When her fame was little impaired by the falling off manifest in 'Camilla,' when many readers were looking with impatience for a novel which might bring before them revolutionary and imperial France, she did not ask more than eleven hundred guineas for the copyright of 'The Wanderer.' This seems very much against the two thousand guineas legend in the case of 'Cecilia.'[1]

[1] Mr. Crisp writes of Dr. Burney's intention to add something to the sum which his daughter had received for 'Cecilia' in order "to make it even money." Burke said to her, speaking of 'Cecilia,' "But I have one other fault to find, and a far more material one than any I have mentioned;—the disposal of this book. I have much advice to offer you upon that subject. Why did you not send for your own friend out of

The correspondence between Mr. Crisp and Miss Burney while she was at work on 'Cecilia' is given in the second volume of her 'Diary.' She sometimes changed things to please him, and sometimes resisted his advice. Dr. Burney had his say besides. Mrs. and Miss Thrale were permitted to laugh, or to cry, over the manuscript, but the only word said of Dr. Johnson's part in it, is the record of his flat denial that he ever saw the book until it was printed. He was probably not consulted lest the whole credit should be given to him.

Macaulay thought that he could trace the corrections—nay, more than the corrections—of Johnson throughout 'Cecilia.' Of one passage which he gives us, at least, corrected by the great Doctor, a part is cited by Boswell among serious (as opposed to burlesque) imitations of Johnson's style. It is this, from Delvile's first letter to Cecilia:—"My family, mistaking ambition for honour, and rank for dignity, have long planned a splendid connexion for me, to which, though my invariable repugnance has stopped any advances, their wishes and their views immoveably adhere. I am but too certain they will now listen to no other. I dread therefore to make a trial where I despair of success. I know not how to risk a prayer with those who may silence me by a command."

The first sentence of this extract has blemishes so obvious that it is plain Boswell might easily have chosen a better passage for his purpose. Macaulay has chosen a second, much better suited to his.[1] In the most Johnsonian passage in 'Cecilia,' Boswell seems only to have seen a serious imitation of Johnson's style; "whether," as he writes, "intentionally, or by the imperceptible effect of its strength

the city?" (Briggs) "he would have taken care you should not part with it so much below par."—*Diary of Mme D'Arblay*, p. 196, vol. ii. Two thousand pounds could not, even by Burke, using the most friendly of hyperboles, have then been called below par.

[1] "Even the imperious Mr. Delvile was more supportable here than in London. Secure in his own castle, he looked round him with a pride of power and possession which softened while it swelled him. His superiority was undisputed: his will was without control. He was not, as in the great capital of the kingdom, surrounded by competitors. No rivalry disturbed his peace; no equality mortified his greatness. All he saw were either vassals of his power, or guests bending to his pleasure.

and animation." Such imitations are quoted by Boswell from Gibbon, Robertson, and others besides Miss Burney.

Over all those writers she had a great advantage, that of living long under the same roof with Dr. Johnson; she had caught his manner by ear as well as eye.

No evidence gathered from the style of 'Cecilia' can, it seems to us, outweigh the declaration of Dr. Johnson, recorded in the 'Diary of Madame D'Arblay' on the 4th of November, 1782:—

"Some people want to make out some credit to me from the little rogue's book. I was told by a gentleman this morning that it was a very fine book if it was all her own. 'It is all her own,' said I, 'for me, I am sure, for I never saw one word before it was printed.'"[1]

It is quite true that, as Macaulay said, "No such paragraph as that beginning with, 'Even the imperious Mr. Delvile,' &c.[2] can be found in any of Madame D'Arblay's works except 'Cecilia.'" Does this show more than that the influence of Dr. Johnson's manner of expressing his thoughts was transient upon a mind so mobile and sensitive as that of Frances Burney? In 1796 she would seem to have borrowed the pen of Anna Seward, who had friends

He abated, therefore, considerably the stern gloom of his haughtiness, and soothed his proud mind by the courtesy of condescension."

Macaulay writes of this passage: "This is in a good style, though not in a faultless one. We say with confidence, either Sam Johnson, or the Devil."

[1] Although Madame D'Arblay lived so near our own time, and has left ample journals, full of facts about herself, she has been subjected to many, and surprising, misrepresentations. Some of the most perverse of them are in a narrative, filling six pages of that wild work which the late Mr. T. J. Hogg was pleased to call "The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley." Hogg seems to have met Madame D'Arblay, by chance, in the year 1812. He makes her tell, and tells about her, a story every particular of which is untrue. He drew on a failing memory, or on a reckless fancy; he decries her, and her father, and winds all up by imputing to her brother, Admiral Burney, whom he does not seem to have met, the loss of sixteen men out of a boat's crew in one of Cook's voyages, through Burney's "misplaced confidence and misplaced obstinacy." Every detail given by Hogg of this calamity is incorrect. A poor midshipman and nine men were slain by New Zealand savages; Lieutenant Burney was merely sent in search of this party when their boat failed to return.

[2] See note 1, p. xviii.

of "luxuriantly blossoming talents," some of whom lay "sopha'ed on silk;" others felt "Petrarchan[1] attachments," enjoyed "Edenic privileges," or roamed in "Salvatorial dales." It is not likely that this fair Euphuist imitated Madame D'Arblay, or that she was imitated by her in 'Camilla.' Each, perhaps, displays what Dr. Johnson's style might come to, when improved by a conceited clever woman with some learning, such as was Miss Seward; or by a more able, but self-taught writer, like Frances Burney.

It is almost lost labour to scrutinize the style of an author who, when she aimed at style, wrote amiss. When she wrote as Nature bade her, she sometimes fell into bad grammar, and now and then let slip vulgar words or phrases, but on the whole expressed her meaning in a not unpleasant manner.

The first volume of 'Cecilia' is written with considerable care; the rest show signs of haste. Dr. Burney was impatient for the publication of a second work, and hurried his daughter, who wished to have more time for the revision of 'Cecilia.' This may be the reason why homely, or odd, expressions are left straggling among patches of stately Johnsonese. Mr. Gosport leaves a room. Mrs. Charlton departs this life. The very same phrase, and that phrase a stage direction, is used in both cases. "He made his *exit*." "Mrs. Charlton had made her *exit* during the night." In 'Camilla,' people "stroam[2] the fields," or "stroam into a ball-room, led by the start of the moment;" and instead of making their *exits*, they "make off," so that we can quite believe "scrawl" instead of "crawl," in 'Cecilia' to be no mere printer's error. "Me,"[3] is used as a nominative case, "should" instead of "would," "slow," "wrong," "right," occur as adverbs. Miss Burney's sentences are sometimes made obscure by the use of pronouns instead of proper names; but they are still

[1] By a "Petrarchan attachment," Miss Seward means an attachment to the wife of another man.

[2] This very vulgar corruption of "stroll" is also used by Miss Edgeworth.

[3] We remember hearing Dr. Whewell defend a little girl who said "Me," instead of I. "It was," he said, "so natural, that it could not be wrong."

more often inverted, than involved. "Words in disarray," as Dr. Johnson said, were very common in print before 1800, and a few instances of "disarray" may be found in the early prose of Scott, as in that of Miss Edgeworth and Miss Austen. *They* give up these ornaments of style, ("French beads and Bristol stones!" we call them) as they write on.

Never was writer so bent on putting words out of their natural order as Miss Burney. The trick becomes unpleasant to the eye; still more so to the ear, if 'Cecilia' be read aloud. One of Miss Burney's great aims is to avoid what she may have thought the mean, little words, "do" and "did." Such evasions of "did," as "he found not," "she felt not," abound. When she wrote "a regard the most partial," "a reverence the most profound," "reasons unanswerable," "amazement unspeakable," it may be said that she Gallicized—Gallicize she sometimes did; as, for instance, when she used "to guard" in the sense of to keep, and "long-attended happiness" when she meant long-expected. Still we fancy that she considered inversion to be ornamental, nay, dignified, and did not consciously affect a French arrangement of words as being French. What she came to in 'Camilla' is so insufferable, that, on finding this simple sentence "Thus lived and died another week," we copied it at once as being the best in the five volumes.

The worst of her was that she set herself to work to embellish a language of which she was not mistress—the difficult and unsettled English tongue. "Surely," she wrote, "I may make words when at a loss, if Dr. Johnson does." When Dr. Johnson made words, which was more rarely than is thought, he drew them from languages which he knew well, in concord with old laws of word-making. They might be cumbrous, but they were correct. He had pressed Miss Burney to let him teach her Latin. She did not get enough of it to do her any good; and, most likely, not even enough to do her any harm.[1] It is to her native

[1] Miss Burney withdrew rather ungraciously from the Latin lessons Dr. Johnson gave to her with Miss Thrale. There are some smart hits at her and her father (that "goose of a man," who did not want Fanny to know as much as he did!) in Mrs. Thrale's note-book. Fanny herself

genius for word-making that we owe a "woe-teeming passion," and other fine flowers of speech. An officer looks well in uniform, she makes him "show his fine person to regimental advantage." She lies awake at night, "my thoughts take an ascendance over my Morphetic faculty." A bull-dog attacks the hero of 'Camilla;' the heroine "darts down the bank, and arrives at the tremendous spot."[1]

It is impossible to acquit Miss Burney of affectation, unless we deny her that fine judgment which is known by the very poor name of "taste." Her love of finery in phrases increased, until even her letters and Diary were marred by it.

She seems to have loved reading, and to have gone on loving it. She was so far beyond her old friend Mrs. Thrale, that she knew how to value Scott. Mrs. Thrale, who was twelve years older than Madame D'Arblay, complained that the 'Tales of My Landlord' were written in a new way, quite unlike what was admired when she was young.

Yet the critical perceptions of Madame D'Arblay do not seem to have been acute. She writes to her father, that she will stake her new cottage (Camilla Cottage, built with the profits of her book) that Mason is the author of 'The Pursuits of Literature.' From that wearisome work she selects for high praise, an atrocious line on Shakespeare,

"His pen he dipped in mind."

It is impossible to doubt that to Frances Burney we owe in great measure the many admirable novels written by women. The discovery that a young and modest lady could write without causing horror to her friends, and while marrying her heroines, hindering her own marriage, must

wrote, "To devote so much time to acquire something (Latin) I shall always dread to have known, is really unpleasant enough." "I have more fear of the malignity which will attend it's being known, than delight in what advantages it may afford." Here Miss Burney seems to us to show a fine eye for matrimonial prospects.

[1] These examples are taken from later writings than 'Cecilia,' in order to show to what the comparatively healthy style of 'Cecilia' could and did degenerate.

have had great influence upon the families of two ladies younger than Madame D'Arblay, of Maria Edgeworth, born in 1767, and of Jane Austen, born in 1775, as well as upon themselves.

It is scarcely possible to read some of Miss Edgeworth's early writings, and quite impossible to read the three first novels of Miss Austen, without perceiving how much both writers were affected by what Miss Burney had written. It is shown even more by what they avoid in her than by what they imitate. They have absorbed all that is best in her books, and with humour beyond her own, they make those of their heroines who are most after their own hearts, act as Evelina, Cecilia, or Camilla, never could, or would have done. This is more specially said of Miss Austen. Miss Edgeworth was reared among the ministers of the new cult of Utility, and might perhaps have made her Belindas and Carolines prudent to as painful an excess, if she had never read 'Cecilia,' but should we have had Elinor Dashwood, and Elizabeth Bennet? Such a first book as 'Pride and Prejudice,' written at one-and-twenty, is more wonderful than all that Frances Burney ever wrote. Yet if she never reaches Miss Austen's surety of touch and harmony of tone, she may be said to aim higher. Miss Austen always works within limits, of her own choice; imposed on her, it may be, by her own judgment, which told her to write comedy. There is not one death in her six novels, and very few disasters. Frances Burney chose larger canvases, some subjects more tragic, and some models more heroic in their proportions. She moved to tears three generations: one which was growing old while she was young, one whose life ran with her own, and one born while she was famous. She just missed knowing Richardson; she was sought and honoured by Scott.

A LETTER

From the Right Honourable Edmund Burke to Miss F. Burney.

Madam,

I should feel exceedingly to blame if I could refuse to myself the natural satisfaction, and to you the just but poor return, of my best thanks for the very great instruction and entertainment I have received from the new present you have bestowed on the public. There are few—I believe I may say fairly there are none at all—that will not find themselves better informed concerning human nature, and their stock of observation enriched by reading your 'Cecilia.' They certainly will, let their experience in life and manners be what it may. The arrogance of age must submit to be taught by youth. You have crowded into a few small volumes an incredible variety of characters; most of them well planned, well supported, and well contrasted with each other. If there be any fault in this respect, it is one in which you are in no great danger of being imitated. Justly as your characters are drawn, perhaps they are too numerous. But I beg pardon; I fear it is quite in vain to preach economy to those who are come young to excessive and sudden opulence.

I might trespass on your delicacy if I should fill my letter to you with what I fill my conversation to others. I should be troublesome to you alone if I should tell you all I feel and think on the natural vein of humour, the tender pathetic, the comprehensive and noble moral, and the sagacious observation, that appear quite throughout that extraordinary performance.

In an age distinguished by producing extraordinary women, I hardly dare to tell you where my opinion would place you amongst them. I respect your modesty, that will not endure the commendations which your merit forces from everybody.

I have the honour to be, with great gratitude, respect, and esteem, madam, your most obedient and most humble servant, Edm. Burke.

Whitehall, July 29, 1782.

My best compliments and congratulations to Dr. Burney on the great honour acquired to his family.

[*THE ORIGINAL PREFACE TO 'CECILIA.'*]

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE indulgence shown by the public to *Evelina* which, unpatronized, unaided, and unowned, past through Four Editions in one year, has encouraged its Author to risk this *second* attempt. The animation of success is too universally acknowledged to make the writer of the following sheets dread much censure of temerity; though the precariousness of any power to give pleasure suppresses all vanity of confidence, and sends *Cecilia* into the world with scarce more hope, though far more encouragement, than attended her highly honoured predecessor, *Evelina*.

JULY, 1782.

CECILIA.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

A JOURNEY.

"PEACE to the spirits of my honoured parents, respected be their remains, and immortalized their virtues! may time, while it moulders their frail relics to dust, commit to tradition the record of their goodness! and, oh, may their orphan descendant be influenced through life by the remembrance of their purity, and in death be solaced, that by her it was unsullied!"

Such was the secret prayer with which the only survivor of the Beverley family quitted the abode of her youth, and residence of her forefathers; while tears of recollecting sorrow filled her eyes, and obstructed the last view of her native town which had excited them.

Cecilia, this fair traveller, had lately entered into the one-and-twentieth year of her age. Her ancestors had been rich farmers in the county of Suffolk, though her father, in whom a spirit of elegance had supplanted the rapacity of wealth, had spent his time as a private country gentleman, satisfied, without increasing his store, to live upon what he inherited from the labours of his predecessors. She had lost him in her early youth, and her mother had not long survived him. They had bequeathed to her £10,000, and consigned her to the care of the Dean of ——, her uncle. With this gentleman, in whom, by various contingencies, the accumulated possessions of a rising and prosperous family were centred, she had passed the last four years of her life; and a few weeks only had yet elapsed since his death, which, by depriving her of her last rela-

tion, made her heiress to an estate of £3,000 per annum; with no other restriction than that of annexing her name, if she married, to the disposal of her hand and her riches.

But though thus largely indebted to fortune, to nature she had yet greater obligations: her form was elegant, her heart was liberal; her countenance announced the intelligence of her mind, her complexion varied with every emotion of her soul, and her eyes, the heralds of her speech, now beamed with understanding and now glistened with sensibility.

For the short period of her minority, the management of her fortune, and the care of her person, had been entrusted by the Dean to three guardians, among whom her own choice was to settle her residence: but her mind, saddened by the loss of all her natural friends, coveted to regain its serenity in the quietness of the country, and in the bosom of an aged and maternal counsellor, whom she loved as her mother, and to whom she had been known from her childhood.

The Deanery, indeed, she was obliged to relinquish, a long repining expectant being eager, by entering it, to bequeath to another the anxiety and suspense he had suffered himself, though probably without much impatience to shorten their duration in favour of the next successor; but the house of Mrs. Charlton, her benevolent friend, was open for her reception, and the alleviating tenderness of her conversation took from her all wish of changing it.

Here she had dwelt since the interment of her uncle; and here, from the affectionate gratitude of her disposition, she had perhaps been content to dwell till her own, had not her guardians interfered to remove her.

Reluctantly she complied. She quitted her early companions, the friend she most revered, and the spot which contained the relics of all she had yet lived to lament; and, accompanied by one of her guardians, and attended by two servants, she began her journey from Bury to London.

Mr. Harrel, this gentleman, though in the prime of his life, though gay, fashionable and splendid, had been appointed by her uncle to be one of her trustees; a choice which had for object the peculiar gratification of his niece, whose most favourite young friend Mr. Harrel had married,

and in whose house he therefore knew she would most wish to live.

Whatever good-nature could dictate or politeness suggest to dispel her melancholy, Mr. Harrel failed not to urge; and Cecilia, in whose disposition sweetness was tempered with dignity, and gentleness with fortitude, suffered not his kind offices to seem ineffectual; she kissed her hand at the last glimpse a friendly hill afforded of her native town, and made an effort to forget the regret with which she lost sight of it. She revived her spirits by plans of future happiness, dwelt upon the delight with which she should meet her young friend, and, by accepting his consolation, amply rewarded his trouble.

Her serenity, however, had yet another, though milder trial to undergo, since another friend was yet to be met, and another farewell was yet to be taken.

At the distance of seven miles from Bury resided Mr. Monckton, the richest and most powerful man in that neighbourhood, at whose house Cecilia and her guardian were invited to breakfast in their journey.

Mr. Monckton, who was the younger son of a noble family, was a man of parts, information and sagacity; to great native strength of mind he added a penetrating knowledge of the world, and to faculties the most skilful of investigating the character of every other, a dissimulation the most profound in concealing his own. In the bloom of his youth, impatient for wealth and ambitious of power, he had tied himself to a rich dowager of quality, whose age, though sixty-seven, was but among the smaller species of her evil properties, her disposition being far more repulsive than her wrinkles. An inequality of years so considerable, had led him to expect that the fortune he had thus acquired, would speedily be released from the burthen with which it was at present incumbered; but his expectations proved as vain as they were mercenary, and his lady was not more the dupe of his protestations, than he was himself of his own purposes. Ten years he had been married to her, yet her health was good, and her faculties were unimpaired; eagerly he had watched for her dissolution, yet his eagerness had injured no health but his own! So short-sighted is selfish cunning, that in aim-

ing no further than at the gratification of the present moment, it obscures the evils of the future, while it impedes the perception of integrity and honour.

His ardour, however, to attain the blest period of returning liberty, deprived him neither of spirit nor inclination for intermediate enjoyment; he knew the world too well to incur its censure by ill-treating the woman to whom he was indebted for the rank he held in it: he saw her, indeed, but seldom, yet he had the decency, alike in avoiding as in meeting her, to show no abatement of civility and good breeding: but, having thus sacrificed to ambition all possibility of happiness in domestic life, he turned his thoughts to those other methods of procuring it which he had so dearly purchased the power of essaying.

The resources of pleasure to the possessors of wealth are only to be cut off by the satiety of which they are productive: a satiety which the vigorous mind of Mr. Monckton had not yet suffered him to experience; his time, therefore, was either devoted to the expensive amusements of the metropolis, or spent in the country among the gayest of its diversions.

The little knowledge of fashionable manners and of the characters of the times of which Cecilia was yet mistress, she had gathered at the house of this gentleman, with whom the Dean her uncle had been intimately connected: for, as he preserved to the world the same appearance of decency he supported to his wife, he was everywhere well received, and being but partially known, was extremely respected: the world, with its wonted facility, repaying his circumspect attention to its laws, by silencing the voice of censure, guarding his character from impeachment, and his name from reproach.

Cecilia had been known to him half her life; she had been caressed in his house as a beautiful child, and her presence was now solicited there as an amiable acquaintance. Her visits, indeed, had by no means been frequent, as the ill-humour of Lady Margaret Monckton had rendered them painful to her; yet the opportunities they had afforded her of mixing with people of fashion, had served to prepare her for the new scenes in which she was soon to be a performer.

Mr. Monckton, in return, had always been a welcome guest at the Deanery; his conversation was to Cecilia a never-failing source of information, as his knowledge of life and manners enabled him to start those subjects of which she was most ignorant; and her mind, copious for the admission and intelligent for the arrangement of knowledge, received all new ideas with avidity.

Pleasure given in society, like money lent in usury, returns with interest to those who dispense it: and the discourse of Mr. Monckton conferred not a greater favour upon Cecilia than her attention to it repaid. And thus, the speaker and the hearer being mutually gratified, they had always met with complacency, and commonly parted with regret.

This reciprocation of pleasure had, however, produced different effects upon their minds; the ideas of Cecilia were enlarged, while the reflections of Mr. Monckton were embittered. He here saw an object who to all the advantages of that wealth he had so highly prized, added youth, beauty, and intelligence; though much her senior, he was by no means of an age to render his addressing her an impropriety, and the entertainment she received from his conversation, persuaded him that her good opinion might with ease be improved into a regard the most partial. He regretted the venal rapacity with which he had sacrificed himself to a woman he abhorred, and his wishes for her final decay became daily more fervent. He knew that the acquaintance of Cecilia was confined to a circle of which he was himself the principal ornament, that she had rejected all the proposals of marriage which had hitherto been made to her, and, as he had sedulously watched her from her earliest years, he had reason to believe that her heart had escaped any dangerous impression. This being her situation, he had long looked upon her as his future property; as such he had indulged his admiration, and as such he had already appropriated her estate, though he had not more vigilantly inspected into her sentiments, than he had guarded his own from a similar scrutiny.

The death of the Dean had, indeed, much alarmed him; he grieved at her leaving Suffolk, where he considered himself the first man, alike in parts and in consequence, and

he dreaded her residing in London, where he foresaw that numerous rivals, equal to himself in talents and in riches, would speedily surround her; rivals, too, youthful and sanguine, not shackled by present ties, but at liberty to solicit her immediate acceptance. Beauty and independence, rarely found together, would attract a crowd of suitors at once brilliant and assiduous; and the house of Mr. Harrel was eminent for its elegance and gaiety; but yet, undaunted by danger, and confiding in his own powers, he determined to pursue the project he had formed, not fearing by address and perseverence to ensure its success.

CHAPTER II.

AN ARGUMENT.

MR. MONCKTON had, at this time, a party of company assembled at his house for the purpose of spending the Christmas holidays. He waited with anxiety the arrival of Cecilia, and flew to hand her from the chaise before Mr. Harrel could alight. He observed the melancholy of her countenance, and was much pleased to find that her London journey had so little power to charm her. He conducted her to the breakfast parlour, where Lady Margaret and his friends expected her.

Lady Margaret received her with a coldness that bordered upon incivility; irascible by nature and jealous by situation, the appearance of beauty alarmed, and of cheerfulness disgusted her. She regarded with watchful suspicion whoever was addressed by her husband, and having marked his frequent attendance at the Deanery, she had singled out Cecilia for the object of her peculiar antipathy; while Cecilia, perceiving her aversion, though ignorant of its cause, took care to avoid all intercourse with her but what ceremony exacted, and pitied in secret the unfortunate lot of her friend.

The company now present consisted of one lady and several gentlemen.

Miss Bennet, the lady, was in every sense of the phrase,

the humble companion of Lady Margaret; she was low-born, meanly educated, and narrow-minded; a stranger alike to innate merit or acquired accomplishments, yet skilful in the art of flattery, and an adept in every species of low cunning. With no other view in life than the attainment of affluence without labour, she was not more the slave of the mistress of the house, than the tool of its master; receiving indignity without murmur, and submitting to contempt as a thing of course.

Among the gentlemen, the most conspicuous, by means of his dress, was Mr. Arcsby, a captain in the militia; a young man who, having frequently heard the words red-coat and gallantry put together, imagined the conjunction not merely customary, but honourable, and therefore, without even pretending to think of the service of his country, he considered a cockade as a badge of politeness, and wore it but to mark his devotion to the ladies, whom he held himself equipped to conquer, and bound to adore.

The next who, by forwardness the most officious, took care to be noticed, was Mr. Morrice, a young lawyer, who, though rising in his profession, owed his success neither to distinguished abilities, nor to skill-supplying industry, but to the art of uniting suppleness to others with confidence in himself. To a reverence of rank, talents, and fortune the most profound, he joined an assurance in his own merit, which no superiority could depress; and with a presumption which encouraged him to aim at all things, he blended a good humour that no mortification could lessen. And while by the pliability of his disposition he avoided making enemies, by his readiness to oblige he learned the surest way of making friends, by becoming useful to them.

There were also some neighbouring squires; and there was one old gentleman, who, without seeming to notice any of the company, sat frowning in a corner.

But the principal figure in the circle was Mr. Belfield, a tall, thin young man, whose face was all animation, and whose eyes sparkled with intelligence. He had been intended by his father for trade, but his spirit, soaring above the occupation for which he was designed, from repining led him to resist, and from resisting, to rebel. He eloped from his friends, and contrived to enter the army. But,

fond of the polite arts, and eager for the acquirement of knowledge, he found not this way of life much better adapted to his inclination than that from which he had escaped; he soon grew weary of it, was reconciled to his father, and entered at the Temple. But here, too volatile for serious study, and too gay for laborious application, he made little progress: and the same quickness of parts and vigour of imagination which, united with prudence or accompanied by judgment, might have raised him to the head of his profession, being unhappily associated with fickleness and caprice, served only to impede his improvement, and obstruct his preferment. And now, with little business, and that little neglected, a small fortune, and that fortune daily becoming less, the admiration of the world, but that admiration ending simply in civility, he lived an unsettled and unprofitable life, generally caressed, and universally sought, yet careless of his interest, and thoughtless of the future; devoting his time to company, his income to dissipation, and his heart to the Muses.

"I bring you," said Mr. Monckton, as he attended Cecilia into the room, "a subject of sorrow in a young lady, who never gave disturbance to her friends but in quitting them."

"If sorrow," cried Mr. Belfield, darting upon her his piercing eyes, "wears in your part of the world a form such as this, who would wish to change it for a view of joy?"

"She's divinely handsome, indeed!" cried the captain, affecting an involuntary exclamation.

Meantime, Cecilia, who was placed next to the lady of the house, quietly began her breakfast; Mr. Morrice, the young lawyer, with the most easy freedom, seating himself at her side, while Mr. Monckton was elsewhere arranging the rest of his guests, in order to secure that place for himself.

Mr. Morrice, without ceremony, attacked his fair neighbour; he talked of her journey, and the prospects of gaiety which it opened to her view; but by these finding her unmoved, he changed his theme, and expatiated upon the delights of the spot she was quitting. Studious to recommend himself to her notice, and indifferent by what

means, one moment he flippantly extolled the entertainments of the town; and the next, rapturously described the charms of the country. A word, a look, sufficed to mark her approbation or dissent, which he no sooner discovered, than he slided into her opinion with as much facility and satisfaction as if it had originally been his own.

Mr. Monckton, suppressing his chagrin, waited some time in expectation that when this young man saw he was standing, he would yield to him his chair: but the remark was not made, and the resignation was not thought of. The Captain, too, regarding the lady as his natural property for the morning, perceived with indignation by whom he was supplanted; while the company in general saw, with much surprise, the place they had severally forborne to occupy from respect to their host, thus familiarly seized upon by the man who, in the whole room, had the least claim, either from age or rank, to consult nothing but his own inclination.

Mr. Monckton, however, when he found that delicacy and good manners had no weight with his guest, thought it most expedient to allow them none with himself; and therefore, disguising his displeasure under an appearance of facetiousness, he called out, "Come, Morrice, you that love Christmas sports, what say you to the game of move-all?"

"I like it of all things!" answered Morrice, and starting from his chair, he skipped to another.

"So should I too," cried Mr. Monckton, instantly taking his place, "were I to remove from any seat but this."

Morrice, though he felt himself outwitted, was the first to laugh, and seemed as happy in the change as Mr. Monckton himself.

Mr. Monckton now, addressing himself to Cecilia, said, "We are going to lose you, and you seem concerned at leaving us; yet, in a very few months, you will forget Bury, forget its inhabitants, and forget its environs."

"If you think so," answered Cecilia, "must I not thence infer that Bury, its inhabitants, and its environs, will in a very few months forget me?"

"Ay, ay, and so much the better!" said Lady Mar-

garet, muttering between her teeth, "so much the better!"

"I am sorry you think so, madam," cried Cecilia, colouring at her ill-breeding.

"You will find," said Mr. Monckton, affecting the same ignorance of her meaning that Cecilia really felt, "as you mix with the world, you will find that Lady Margaret has but expressed what by almost everybody is thought: to neglect old friends, and to court new acquaintance, though perhaps not yet avowedly delivered as a precept from parents to children, is nevertheless so universally recommended by example, that those who act differently, incur general censure for affecting singularity."

"It is happy then, for me," answered Cecilia, "that neither my actions nor myself will be sufficiently known to attract public observation."

"You intend, then, madam," said Mr. Belfield, "in defiance of these maxims of the world, to be guided by the light of your own understanding."

"And such," returned Mr. Monckton, "at first setting out in life, is the intention of every one. The closet reasoner is always refined in his sentiments, and always confident in his virtue; but when he mixes with the world, when he thinks less and acts more, he soon finds the necessity of accommodating himself to such customs as are already received, and of pursuing quietly the track that is already marked out."

"But not," exclaimed Mr. Belfield, "if he has the least grain of spirit! the beaten track will be the last that a man of parts will deign to tread,

> 'For common rules were ne'er design'd
> Directors of a noble mind.'"

"A pernicious maxim! a most pernicious maxim!" cried the old gentleman, who sat frowning in a corner of the room.

"Deviations from common rules," said Mr. Monckton, without taking any notice of this interruption, "when they proceed from genius, are not merely pardonable, but admirable; and you, Belfield, have a peculiar right to plead their merits; but so little genius as there is in the

world, you must surely grant that pleas of this sort are very rarely to be urged."

"And why rarely," cried Belfield, "but because your general rules, your appropriated customs, your settled forms, are but so many absurd arrangements to impede not merely the progress of genius, but the use of understanding? If man dared act for himself, if neither worldly views, contracted prejudices, eternal precepts, nor compulsive examples, swayed his better reason and impelled his conduct, how noble indeed would he be! *how infinite in faculties! in apprehension how like a God!*"[1]

"All this," answered Mr. Monckton, "is but the doctrine of a lively imagination, that looks upon impossibilities simply as difficulties, and upon difficulties as mere invitations to victory. But experience teaches another lesson; experience shows that the opposition of an individual to a community is always dangerous in the operation, and seldom successful in the event;—never, indeed, without a concurrence, strange as desirable, of fortunate circumstances with great abilities."

"And why is this," returned Belfield, "but because the attempt is so seldom made? The pitiful prevalence of general conformity extirpates genius, and murders originality; man is brought up, not as if he were 'the noblest work of God,' but as a mere ductile machine of human formation: he is early taught that he must neither consult his understanding, nor pursue his inclinations, lest, unhappily for his commerce with the world, his understanding should be averse to fools, and provoke him to despise them; and his inclinations to the tyranny of perpetual restraint, and give him courage to abjure it."

"I am ready enough to allow," answered Mr. Monckton, "that an eccentric genius, such, for example, as yours, may murmur at the tediousness of complying with the customs of the world, and wish, unconfined and at large, to range through life, without any settled plan or prudential restriction; but would you, therefore, grant the same licence to every one? Would you wish to see the world peopled with defiers of order, and contemners of

[1] Hamlet. (*Author's note.*)

established forms? and not merely excuse the irregularities resulting from uncommon parts, but encourage those also to lead, who, without blundering, cannot even follow?"

"I would have *all* men," replied Belfield, "whether philosophers or idiots, act for themselves. Every one would then appear what he is; enterprize would be encouraged, and imitation abolished; genius would feel its superiority, and folly its insignificance; and then, and then only, should we cease to be surfeited with that eternal sameness of manner and appearance which at present runs through all ranks of men."

"Petrifying dull work this, *mon ami!*" said the captain, in a whisper to Morrice; "*de grace*, start some new game."

"With all my heart," answered he; and then, suddenly jumping up, exclaimed, "A hare! a hare!"

"Where?—where?—which way?" and all the gentlemen arose, and ran to different windows, except the master of the house, the object of whose pursuit was already near him.

Morrice, with much pretended earnestness, flew from window to window, to trace footsteps upon the turf which he knew had not printed it: yet, never inattentive to his own interest, when he perceived, in the midst of the combustion he had raised, that Lady Margaret was incensed at the noise it produced, he artfully gave over his search, and seating himself in a chair next to her, eagerly offered to assist her with cakes, chocolate, or whatever the table afforded.

He had, however, effectually broken up the conversation; and breakfast being over, Mr. Harrel ordered his chaise, and Cecilia arose to take leave.

And now not without some difficulty could Mr. Monckton disguise the uneasy fears which her departure occasioned him. Taking her hand, "I suppose," he said, "you will not permit an old friend to visit you in town, lest the sight of him should prove a disagreeable memorial of the time you will soon regret having wasted in the country?"

"Why will you say this, Mr. Monckton?" cried Cecilia; "I am sure you cannot think it."

"These profound studiers of mankind, madam," said

Belfield, "are mighty sorry champions for constancy or friendship. They wage war with all expectations but of depravity, and grant no quarter even to the purest designs, where they think there will be any temptation to deviate from them."

"Temptation," said Mr. Monckton, "is very easy of resistance in theory; but if you reflect upon the great change of situation Miss Beverley will experience, upon the new scenes she will see, the new acquaintance she must make, and the new connections she may form, you will not wonder at the anxiety of a friend for her welfare."

"But I presume," cried Belfield, with a laugh, "Miss Beverley does not mean to convey her person to town, and leave her understanding locked up, with other natural curiosities, in the country. Why, therefore, may not the same discernment regulate her adoption of new acquaintance, and choice of new connections, that guided her selection of old ones? Do you suppose that because she is to take leave of you, she is to take leave of herself?"

"Where fortune smiles upon youth and beauty," answered Mr. Monckton, "do you think it nothing that their fair possessor should make a sudden transition of situation from the quietness of a retired life in the country, to the gaiety of a splendid town residence?"

"Where fortune *frowns* upon youth and beauty," returned Belfield, "they may not irrationally excite commiseration; but where nature and chance unite their forces to bless the same object, what room there may be for alarm or lamentation I confess I cannot divine."

"What!" cried Mr. Monckton, with some emotion, "are there not sharpers, fortune-hunters, sycophants, wretches of all sorts and denominations, who watch the approach of the rich and unwary, feed upon their inexperience, and prey upon their property?"

"Come, come," cried Mr. Harrel, "it is time I should hasten my fair ward away, if this is your method of describing the place she is going to live in."

"Is it possible," cried the Captain, advancing to Cecilia, "that this lady has never yet tried the town?" and then, lowering his voice, and smiling languishingly in her face, he added, "Can any thing so divinely handsome have been

immured in the country? Ah! *quelle honte!* do you make it a principle to be so cruel?"

Cecilia, thinking such a compliment merited not any other notice than a slight bow, turned to Lady Margaret, and said, "Should your ladyship be in town this winter, may I expect the honour of hearing where I may wait upon you?"

"I don't know whether I shall go or not," answered the old lady, with her usual ungraciousness.

Cecilia would now have hastened away, but Mr. Monckton, stopping her again, expressed his fears of the consequences of her journey; "Be upon your guard," he cried, "with all new acquaintance; judge nobody from appearances; form no friendship rashly; take time to look about you, and remember you can make no alteration in your way of life without greater probability of faring worse than chance of faring better. Keep therefore as you are, and the more you see of others, the more you will rejoice that you neither resemble nor are connected with them."

"This from you, Mr. Monckton!" cried Belfield, "what is become of your conformity system? I thought all the world was to be alike, or only so much the worse for any variation?"

"I spoke," said Mr. Monckton, "of the world in general, not of this lady in particular; and who that knows, who that sees her, would not wish it were possible she might continue in every respect exactly and unalterably what she is at present?"

"I find," said Cecilia, "you are determined that flattery, at least, should I meet with it, shall owe no pernicious effects to its novelty."

"Well, Miss Beverley," cried Mr. Harrel, "will you now venture to accompany me to town? Or has Mr. Monckton frightened you from proceeding any further?"

"If," replied Cecilia, "I felt no more sorrow in quitting my friends, than I feel terror in venturing to London, with how light a heart should I make the journey!"

"Brava!" cried Belfield, "I am happy to find the discourse of Mr. Monckton has not intimidated you, nor prevailed upon you to deplore your condition, in having the accumulated misery of being young, fair and affluent."

"Alas! poor thing!" exclaimed the old gentleman who sat in the corner, fixing his eyes upon Cecilia, with an expression of mingled grief and pity.

Cecilia started, but no one else paid him any attention.

The usual ceremonies of leave-taking now followed, and the Captain, with most obsequious reverence, advanced to conduct Cecilia to the carriage; but in the midst of the dumb eloquence of his vows and smiles, Mr. Morrice, affecting not to perceive his design, skipped gaily between them, and, without any previous formality, seized the hand of Cecilia himself; failing not, however, to temper the freedom of his action by a look of respect the most profound.

The Captain shrugged and retired. But Mr. Monckton, enraged at his assurance, and determined it should nothing avail him, exclaimed, "Why how now, Morrice, do you take away the privilege of my house?"

"True, true;" answered Morrice, "you members of parliament have an undoubted right to be tenacious of your privileges." Then, bowing with a look of veneration to Cecilia, he resigned her hand with an air of as much happiness as he had taken it.

Mr. Monckton, in leading her to the chaise, again begged permission to wait upon her in town: Mr. Harrel took the hint, and entreated him to consider his house as his own; and Cecilia, gratefully thanking him for his solicitude in her welfare, added, "And I hope, sir, you will honour me with your counsel and admonitions with respect to my future conduct, whenever you have the goodness to let me see you."

This was precisely his wish. He begged, in return, that she would treat him with confidence, and then suffered the chaise to drive off.

CHAPTER III.

AN ARRIVAL.

AS soon as they lost sight of the house, Cecilia expressed her surprise at the behaviour of the old gentleman who sat in the corner, whose general silence, seclusion from the company, and absence of mind, had strongly excited her curiosity.

Mr. Harrel could give her very little satisfaction: he told her that he had twice or thrice met him in public places, where everybody remarked the singularity of his manners and appearance, but that he had never discoursed with any one to whom he seemed known; and that he was as much surprised as herself in seeing so strange a character at the house of Mr. Monckton.

The conversation then turned upon the family they had just quitted, and Cecilia warmly declared the good opinion she had of Mr. Monckton, the obligations she owed to him for the interest which, from her childhood, he had always taken in her affairs; and her hopes of reaping much instruction from the friendship of a man who had so extensive a knowledge of the world.

Mr. Harrel professed himself well satisfied that she should have such a counsellor; for though but little acquainted with him, he knew he was a man of fortune and fashion, and well esteemed in the world. They mutually compassionated his unhappy situation in domestic life, and Cecilia innocently expressed her concern at the dislike Lady Margaret seemed to have taken to her; a dislike which Mr. Harrel naturally imputed to her youth and beauty, yet without suspecting any cause more cogent than a general jealousy of attractions of which she had herself so long outlived the possession.

As their journey drew near to its conclusion, all the uneasy and disagreeable sensations which in the bosom of Cecilia had accompanied its commencement, gave way to the expectation of quick approaching happiness in again meeting her favourite young friend.

Mrs. Harrel had in childhood been her playmate, and in youth her school-fellow; a similarity of disposition with respect to sweetness of temper, had early rendered them dear to each other, though the resemblance extended no further, Mrs. Harrel having no pretensions to the wit or understanding of her friend; but she was amiable and obliging, and therefore sufficiently deserving affection, though neither blazing with attractions which laid claim to admiration, nor endowed with those superior qualities which mingle respect in the love they inspire.

From the time of her marriage, which was near three years, she had entirely quitted Suffolk, and had had no intercourse with Cecilia but by letter. She was now just returned from Violet Bank, the name given by Mr. Harrel to a villa about twelve miles from London, where with a large party of company she had spent the Christmas holidays.

Their meeting was tender and affectionate; the sensibility of Cecilia's heart flowed from her eyes, and the gladness of Mrs. Harrel's dimpled her cheeks.

As soon as their mutual salutations, expressions of kindness, and general enquiries had been made, Mrs. Harrel begged to lead her to the drawing-room, "where," she added, "you will see some of my friends, who are impatient to be presented to you."

"I could have wished," said Cecilia, "after so long an absence, to have passed this first evening alone with you."

"They are all people who particularly desired to see you," she answered, "and I had them by way of entertaining you, as I was afraid you would be out of spirits at leaving Bury."

Cecilia, finding the kindness of her intentions, forbore any further expostulation, and quietly followed her to the drawing-room. But as the door was opened, she was struck with amazement upon finding that the apartment, which was spacious, lighted with brilliancy, and decorated with magnificence, was more than half filled with company, everyone of which was dressed with gaiety and profusion.

Cecilia, who from the word friends, expected to have seen a small and private party, selected for the purpose of social

converse, started involuntarily at the sight before her, and had hardly courage to proceed.[1]

Mrs. Harrel, however, took her hand, and introduced her to the whole company, who were all severally named to her; a ceremonial which, though not merely agreeable but even necessary to those who live in the gay world, in order to obviate distressing mistakes, or unfortunate implications in discourse, would by Cecilia have been willingly dispensed with, since to her their names were as new as their persons, and since knowing nothing of their histories, parties, or connections, she could to nothing allude: it therefore served but to heighten her colour and increase her embarrassment.

A native dignity of mind, however, which had early taught her to distinguish modesty from bashfulness, enabled her in a short time to conquer her surprise, and recover her composure. She entreated Mrs. Harrel to apologize for her appearance, and being seated between two young ladies, endeavoured to seem reconciled to it herself. Nor was this very difficult; for while her dress, which she had not changed since her journey, joined to the novelty of her face, attracted general observation, the report of her fortune, which had preceded her entrance, secured to her general respect. She soon found, too, that a company was not necessarily formidable because full dressed, that familiarity could be united with magnificence, and that though, to her, everyone seemed attired to walk in a procession, or to grace a drawing-room, no formality was assumed, and no solemnity was affected: everyone was without restraint, even rank obtained but little distinction; ease was the general plan, and entertainment the general pursuit.

Cecilia, though new to London, which city the ill-health of her uncle had hitherto prevented her seeing, was yet no stranger to company; she had passed her time in retirement, but not in obscurity, since for some years past she had presided at the table of the Dean, who was visited by the first people of the county in which he lived: and notwithstanding his parties, which were frequent, though

[1] "Brighthelmstone, October 26, 1782.—Mrs. Thrale declared she had refused a flaming party of blues, for fear I should think, if I met them just after my journey, she was playing Mrs. Harrel with me."—*Miss Burney's Journal.*

small, and elegant, though private, had not prepared her for the splendour or the diversity of a London assembly, they yet, by initiating her in the practical rules of good-breeding, had taught her to subdue the timid fears of total inexperience, and to repress the bashful feelings of shame-faced awkwardness; fears and feelings which rather call for compassion than admiration, and which, except in extreme youth, serve but to degrade the modesty they indicate.

She regarded, therefore, the two young ladies between whom she was seated, rather with a wish of addressing, than a shyness of being attacked by them; but the elder, Miss Larolles, was earnestly engaged in discourse with a gentleman, and the younger, Miss Leeson, totally discouraged her, by the invariable silence and gravity with which from time to time she met her eyes.

Uninterrupted, therefore, except by occasional speeches from Mr. and Mrs. Harrel, she spent the first part of the evening merely in surveying the company.

Nor was the company dilatory in returning her notice, since from the time of her entrance into the room, she had been the object of general regard.

The ladies took an exact inventory of her dress, and internally settled how differently they would have been attired if blessed with equal affluence.

The men disputed among themselves whether or not she was painted; and one of them asserting boldly that she *rouged well*, a debate ensued, which ended in a bet, and the decision was mutually agreed to depend upon the colour of her cheeks by the beginning of April, when, if unfaded by bad hours and continual dissipation, they wore the same bright bloom with which they were now glowing, her champion acknowledged that his wager would be lost.

In about half an hour the gentleman with whom Miss Larolles had been talking, left the room, and then that young lady, turning suddenly to Cecilia, exclaimed, "How odd Mr. Meadows is! Do you know he says he sha'n't be well enough to go to Lady Nyland's assembly! How ridiculous! as if that could hurt him."

Cecilia, surprised at an attack so little ceremonious, lent her a civil, but silent attention.

"You shall be there, sha'n't you?" she added.

"No, ma'am, I have not the honour of being at all known to her ladyship."

"Oh, there's nothing in that," returned she; "for Mrs. Harrel can acquaint her you are here, and then, you know, she'll send you a ticket, and then you can go."

"A ticket?" repeated Cecilia. "Does Lady Nyland only admit her company with tickets?"

"O lord," cried Miss Larolles, laughing immoderately, "don't you know what I mean? Why, a ticket is only a visiting card, with a name upon it; but we all call them tickets now."[1]

Cecilia thanked her for the information, and then Miss Larolles enquired "how many miles she had travelled since morning?"

"Seventy-three," answered Cecilia, "which I hope will plead my apology for being so little dressed."

"O, you're vastly well," returned the other, "and for my part, I never think about dress. But only conceive what happened to me last year! Do you know I came to town the twentieth of March! Was not that horrid provoking?"

"Perhaps so," said Cecilia, "but I am sure I cannot tell why."

"Not tell why?" repeated Miss Larolles, "why don't you know it was the very night of the grand private masquerade at Lord Darien's? I would not have missed

[1] Cecilia, fresh from Suffolk, might well object to this misuse of the word "ticket." If she opened her "Johnson's Dictionary," she found—"Ticket, (*étiquet*) *n. s.* A token of any right or debt, upon the delivery of which admission is granted, or a claim acknowledged." The word *Card* itself has but three meanings in this Dictionary, which was begun in 1747, and ended in 1755:—"1. A paper painted with figures, used in games of chance or skill." 2. The paper on which the words are marked under the mariner's needle. 3. A carding instrument, &c." Messages of inquiry, compliment, or invitation, were long written on the backs of soiled playing-cards. In the "Spiritual Quixote," (which was published in 1772, though seemingly written some years earlier), there is a diverting chapter on this way of writing notes. Soon afterwards some highly ingenious person contrived blank "message-cards." Perhaps this happy thought came from the continent, as Sir Horace Mann, at Florence, both made visits "*en blanc*" (that is, left his name), and wrote upon black-edged paper, before mention is made of such little usages in London.

it for the whole universe. I never travelled in such an agony in my life; we did not get to town till monstrous late, and then do you know I had neither a ticket nor a habit! Only conceive what a distress! Well, I sent to every creature I knew for a ticket, but they all said there was not one to be had; so I was just like a mad creature—but about ten or eleven o'clock, a young lady of my particular acquaintance, by the greatest good luck in the world happened to be taken suddenly ill; so she sent me her ticket—was not that delightful?"

"For *her*, extremely!" said Cecilia, laughing.

"Well," she continued, "then I was almost out of my wits with joy; and I went about, and got one of the sweetest dresses you ever saw. If you'll call upon me some morning, I'll show it you."

Cecilia, not prepared for an invitation so abrupt, bowed without speaking, and Miss Larolles, too happy in talking herself to be offended at the silence of another, continued her narration.

"Well, but now comes the vilest part of the business; do you know, when every thing else was ready, I could not get my hair-dresser! I sent all over the town—he was nowhere to be found; I thought I should have died with vexation. I assure you I cried so, that if I had not gone in a mask, I should have been ashamed to be seen. And so, after all this monstrous fatigue, I was forced to have my hair dressed by my own maid, quite in a common way; was not it cruelly mortifying?"

"Why yes," answered Cecilia, "I should think it was almost sufficient to make you regret the illness of the young lady who sent you her ticket."

They were now interrupted by Mrs. Harrel, who advanced to them, followed by a young man of a serious aspect and modest demeanour, and said, "I am happy to see you both so well engaged; but my brother has been reproaching me with presenting everybody to Miss Beverley but himself."

"I cannot hope," said Mr. Arnott, "that I have any place in the recollection of Miss Beverley; but long as I have been absent from Suffolk, and unfortunate as I was

in not seeing her during my last visit there, I am yet sure, even at this distance of time, grown and formed as she is, I should instantly have known her."

"Amazing!" cried an elderly gentleman, in a tone of irony, who was standing near them, "for the face is a very common one!"

"I remember well," said Cecilia, "that when you left Suffolk, I thought I had lost my best friend."

"Is that possible?" cried Mr. Arnott, with a look of much delight.

"Yes, indeed, and not without reason, for in all disputes you were my advocate, in all plays, my companion, and in all difficulties, my assistant."

"Madam," cried the same gentleman, "if you liked him because he was your advocate, companion, and assistant, pray like me too, for I am ready to become all three at once."

"You are very good," said Cecilia, laughing, "but at present I find no want of any defender."

"That's pity," he returned, "for Mr. Arnott seems to me very willing to act the same parts over again with you."

"But for that purpose he must return to the days of his childhood."

"Ah, would to Heaven it were possible!" cried Mr. Arnott, "for they were the happiest of my life."

"After such a confession," said his companion, "surely you will let him attempt to renew them? 'Tis but taking a walk backwards; and though it is very early in life for Mr. Arnott to covet that retrogade motion, which, in the regular course of things, we shall all in our turns sigh for, yet with such a motive as recovering Miss Beverley for a playfellow, who can wonder that he anticipates in youth the hopeless wishes of age?"

Here Miss Larolles, who was one of that numerous tribe of young ladies to whom all conversation is irksome in which they are not themselves engaged, quitted her place, of which Mr. Gosport, Cecilia's new acquaintance, immediately took possession.

"Is it utterly impossible," continued this gentleman, "that I should assist in procuring Mr. Arnott such a reno-

vation? Is there no subaltern part I can perform to facilitate the project? for I will either *hide* or *seek* with any boy in the parish; and for a *Q in the corner*, there is none more celebrated."

"I have no doubt, sir," answered Cecilia, "of your accomplishments; and I should be not a little entertained with the surprise of the company, if you could persuade yourself to display them."

"And what," cried he, "could the company do half so well as to arise also, and join in the sport? it would but interrupt some tale of scandal, or some description of a *toûpée*.[1] Active wit, however despicable when compared with intellectual, is yet surely better than the insignificant click-clack of modish conversation," casting his eyes towards Miss Larolles, "or even the pensive dullness of affected silence," changing their direction towards Miss Leeson.

Cecilia, though surprised at an attack upon the society her friend had selected, by one who was admitted to make a part of it, felt its justice too strongly to be offended at its severity.

"I have often wished," he continued, "that when large parties are collected, as here, without any possible reason why they might not as well be separated, something could be proposed in which each person might innocently take a share: for surely after the first half hour, they can find little new to observe in the dress of their neighbours, or to display in their own; and with whatever seeming gaiety they may contrive to fill up the middle and end of the evening, by wire-drawing the comments afforded by the beginning, they are yet so miserably fatigued, that if they have not four or five places to run to every night, they suffer nearly as much from weariness of their friends in company, as they would do from weariness of themselves in solitude."

1 "*Toupet*" (corrupted to *toûpée*), means literally a *tuft* of hair above the forehead. It was applied to a fashion of combing the hair, which was stiffened by powder and pomatum, straight up from the forehead. Wigs were made in this way. Miss Burney says of Prince Orloff:—"The door was barely high enough not to discompose his prodigious *toûpée*."

Here, by the general breaking up of the party, the conversation was interrupted, and Mr. Gosport was obliged to make his exit; not much to the regret of Cecilia, who was impatient to be alone with Mrs. Harrel.

The rest of the evening, therefore, was spent much more to her satisfaction; it was devoted to friendship, to mutual enquiries, to kind congratulations, and endearing recollections; and though it was late when she retired, she retired with reluctance.

CHAPTER IV.

A SKETCH OF HIGH LIFE.

EAGER to renew a conversation which had afforded her so much pleasure, Cecilia, neither sensible of fatigue from her change of hours nor her journey, arose with the light, and as soon as she was dressed, hastened to the breakfast apartment.

She had not, however, been more impatient to enter than she soon became to quit it; for though not much surprised to find herself there before her friend, her ardour for waiting her arrival was somewhat chilled, upon finding the fire but just lighted, the room cold, and the servants still employed in putting it in order.

At ten o'clock she made another attempt; the room was then better prepared for her reception, but still it was empty. Again she was retiring, when the appearance of Mr. Arnott stopt her.

He expressed his surprise at her early rising, in a manner that marked the pleasure it gave to him; and then, returning to the conversation of the preceding evening, he expatiated with warmth and feeling upon the happiness of his boyish days, remembered every circumstance belonging to the plays in which they had formerly been companions, and dwelt upon every incident with a minuteness of delight that showed his unwillingness ever to have done with the subject.

This discourse detained her till they were joined by

Mrs Harrel, and then another, more gay and more general, succeeded to it.

During their breakfast, Miss Larolles was announced as a visitor to Cecilia, to whom she immediately advanced with the intimacy of an old acquaintance, taking her hand, and assuring her she could no longer defer the honour of waiting upon her.

Cecilia, much amazed at this warmth of civility from one to whom she was almost a stranger, received her compliment rather coldly; but Miss Larolles, without consulting her looks, or attending to her manner, proceeded to express the earnest desire she had long had to be known to her; to hope they should meet very often; to declare nothing could make her so happy; and to beg leave to recommend to her notice her own milliner.

"I assure you," she continued, "she has all Paris in her disposal; the sweetest caps![1] the most beautiful trimmings! and her ribbons are quite divine! It is the most dangerous thing you can conceive to go near her; I never trust myself in her room but I am sure to be ruined. If you please, I'll take you to her this morning."

"If her acquaintance is so ruinous," said Cecilia, "I think I had better avoid it."

"O impossible! there's no such thing as living without her. To be sure she's shockingly dear, that I must own; but then who can wonder? She makes such sweet things, 'tis impossible to pay her too much for them."

Mrs. Harrel now joining in the recommendation, the party was agreed upon, and accompanied by Mr. Arnott, the ladies proceeded to the house of the milliner.

Here the raptures of Miss Larolles were again excited: she viewed the finery displayed with delight inexpressible, enquired who were the intended possessors, heard their names with envy, and sighed with all the bitterness of

[1] No woman, young or old, married or unmarried, was then seen without a cap. Dr. Johnson had, perhaps, never seen a lady without a cap, however flimsy, until he went to the Highlands. He writes to Mrs. Thrale from "Skie" in 1773:—"The ladies all, except the eldest, are in the morning dressed in their hair. The true Highlander never wears more than a riband on her head till she is married."

"I ran down without my cap. She" (the Queen) "smiled at sight of my hasty attire . . . . . "—*Diary of Mme D'Arblay*, 1786.

mortification that she was unable to order home almost every thing she looked at.

Having finished their business here, they proceeded to various other dress manufacturers, in whose praises Miss Larolles was almost equally eloquent, and to appropriate whose goods she was almost equally earnest: and then, after attending this loquacious young lady to her father's house, Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia returned to their own.

Cecilia rejoiced at the separation, and congratulated herself that the rest of the day might be spent alone with her friend.

"Why no," said Mrs. Harrel, "not absolutely alone, for I expect some company at night."

"Company again to-night?"

"Nay, don't be frightened, for it will be a very small party; not more than fifteen or twenty in all."

"Is that so small a party?" said Cecilia, smiling; "and how short a time since would you, as well as I, have reckoned it a large one!"

"O, you mean when I lived in the country," returned Mrs. Harrel; "but what in the world could I know of parties or company then?"

"Not much, indeed," said Cecilia, "as my present ignorance shows."

They then parted to dress for dinner.

The company of this evening were again all strangers to Cecilia, except Miss Leeson, who was seated next to her, and whose frigid looks again compelled her to observe the same silence she so resolutely practised herself. Yet not the less was her internal surprise, that a lady who seemed determined neither to give nor receive any entertainment, should repeatedly choose to show herself in a company, with no part of which she associated.

Mr. Arnott, who contrived to occupy the seat on her other side, suffered not the silence with which her fair neighbour had infected her to spread any further. He talked, indeed, upon no new subject; and upon the old one, of their former sports and amusements, he had already exhausted all that was worth being mentioned; but not yet had he exhausted the pleasure he received from the theme; it seemed always fresh and always enchanting to

him; it employed his thoughts, regaled his imagination, and enlivened his discourse. Cecilia in vain tried to change it for another; he quitted it only by compulsion, and returned to it with redoubled eagerness.

When the company was retired, and Mr. Arnott only remained with the ladies, Cecilia, with no little surprise, enquired for Mr. Harrel, observing that she had not seen him the whole day.

"O," cried his lady, "don't think of wondering at that, for it happens continually. He dines at home, indeed, in general, but otherwise I should see nothing of him at all."

"Indeed! why how does he fill up his time?"

"That I am sure I cannot tell, for he never consults me about it; but I suppose much in the same way that other people do."

"Ah, Priscilla!" cried Cecilia, with some earnestness, "how little did I ever expect to see you so much a fine lady!"

"A fine lady?" repeated Mrs. Harrel; "why what is it I do? don't I live exactly like everybody else that mixes at all with the world?"

"You, Miss Beverley," said Mr. Arnott, in a low voice, "will, I hope, give to the world an example, not take one from it."

Soon after, they separated for the night.

The next morning, Cecilia took care to fill up her time more advantageously, than in wandering about the house in search of a companion she now expected not to find: she got together her books, arranged them to her fancy, and secured to herself, for the future occupation of her leisure hours, the exhaustless fund of entertainment which reading, that richest, highest, and noblest source of intellectual enjoyment, perpetually affords.

While they were yet at breakfast, they were again visited by Miss Larolles. "I am come," cried she, eagerly, "to run away with you both to my Lord Belgrade's sale. All the world will be there; and we shall go in with tickets, and you have no notion how it will be crowded."

"What is to be sold there?" said Cecilia.

"O, every thing you can conceive; house, stables, china, laces, horses, caps, every thing in the world."

"And do you intend to buy anything?"

"Lord, no; but one likes to see the people's things."

Cecilia then begged they would excuse her attendance.

"O, by no means," cried Miss Larolles, "you must go, I assure you; there'll be such a monstrous crowd as you never saw in your life. I dare say we shall be half squeezed to death."

"That," said Cecilia, "is an inducement which you must not expect will have much weight with a poor rustic just out of the country: it must require all the polish of a long residence in the metropolis to make it attractive."

"O, but do go, for I assure you it will be the best sale we shall have this season. I can't imagine, Mrs. Harrel, what poor Lady Belgrade will do with herself; I hear the creditors have seized everything; I really believe creditors are the cruelest set of people in the world! They have taken those beautiful buckles out of her shoes! Poor soul! I declare it will make my heart ache to see them put up. It's quite shocking, upon my word. I wonder who'll buy them. I assure you they were the prettiest fancied I ever saw. But come, if we don't go directly, there will be no getting in."

Cecilia again desired to be excused accompanying them, adding, that she wished to spend the day at home.

"At home, my dear?" cried Mrs. Harrel; "why we have been engaged to Mrs. Mears this month, and she begged me to prevail with you to be of the party. I expect she'll call, or send you a ticket, every moment."

"How unlucky for me," said Cecilia, "that you should happen to have so many engagements just at this time! I hope, at least, there will not be any for to-morrow."

"O yes; to-morrow we go to Mrs. Elton's."

"Again to-morrow? and how long is this to last?"

"O, Heaven knows; I'll show you my catalogue."

She then produced a book which contained a list of engagements for more than three weeks. "And as these," she said, "are struck off, new ones are made; and so it is we go on till after the birth-day."[1]

When this list had been examined and commented upon

[1] After King George's birthday, the 4th of June, the Court left St. James's Palace for Windsor, and the "*ton* parties" ended.

by Miss Larolles, and viewed and wondered at by Cecilia, it was restored to its place, and the two ladies went together, to the auction, permitting Cecilia, at her repeated request, to return to her own apartment.

She returned, however, neither satisfied with the behaviour of her friend, nor pleased with her own situation: the sobriety of her education, as it had early instilled into her mind the pure dictates of religion, and strict principles of honour, had also taught her to regard continual dissipation as an introduction to vice, and unbounded extravagance as the harbinger of injustice. Long accustomed to see Mrs. Harrel in the same retirement in which she had hitherto lived herself, when books were their first amusement, and the society of each other was their chief happiness, the change she now perceived in her mind and manners equally concerned and surprised her. She found her insensible to friendship, indifferent to her husband, and negligent of all social felicity. Dress, company, parties of pleasure, and public places, seemed not merely to occupy all her time, but to gratify all her wishes. Cecilia, in whose heart glowed the warmest affections and most generous virtue, was cruelly depressed and mortified by this disappointment; yet she had the good sense to determine against upbraiding her, well aware that if reproach has any power over indifference, it is only that of changing it into aversion.

Mrs. Harrel, in truth, was innocent of heart, though dissipated in life; married very young, she had made an immediate transition from living in a private family and a country town, to becoming mistress of one of the most elegant houses in Portman-square,[1] being at the head of a splendid

[1] "Portman Square was begun about 1764, when the north side of the square was built; but it was twenty years before the whole was finished."—LYSONS.

The house in the north-west angle of the square was built for Mrs. Montagu. In it she had her Blue-Stocking parties. There, in 1792, she showed Miss Burney "her new room, which was a double satisfaction to me, from the elegant paintings by our ingenious Edward" [Burney]. Edward Burney was a cousin of Frances, and made some drawings which were exhibited in the rooms of the Royal Academy, and engraved as vignettes to an early edition of "Evelina."

fortune, and wife to a man whose own pursuits soon showed her the little value he himself set upon domestic happiness. Immersed in the fashionable round of company and diversions, her understanding, naturally weak, was easily dazzled by the brilliancy of her situation; greedily, therefore, sucking in air impregnated with luxury and extravagance, she had soon no pleasure but to vie with some rival in elegance, and no ambition but to exceed some superior in expense.

The Dean of —— in naming Mr. Harrel for one of the guardians of his niece, had no other view than that of indulging her wishes by allowing her to reside in the house of her friend: he had little personal knowledge of him, but was satisfied with the nomination, because acquainted with his family, fortune, and connections, all which persuaded him to believe, without further enquiry, that it was more peculiarly proper for his niece than any other he could make.

In his choice of the other two trustees he had been more prudent; the first of these, the honourable Mr. Delvile, was a man of high birth and character; the second, Mr. Briggs, had spent his whole life in business, in which he had already amassed an immense fortune, and had still no greater pleasure than that of increasing it. From the honour, therefore, of Mr. Delvile, he expected the most scrupulous watchfulness that his niece should in nothing be injured, and from the experience of Mr. Briggs in money matters, and his diligence in transacting business, he hoped for the most vigilant observance that her fortune, while under his care, should be turned to the best account. And thus, as far as he was able, he had equally consulted her pleasure, her security, and her pecuniary advantage.

Mrs. Harrel returned home only in time to dress for the rest of the day.

When Cecilia was summoned to dinner, she found, besides her host and hostess and Mr. Arnott, a gentleman she had not before seen, but who as soon as she entered the parlour, Mr. Harrel presented to her, saying at the same time he was one of the most intimate of his friends.

This gentleman, Sir Robert Floyer, was about thirty years of age; his face was neither remarkable for its beauty nor its ugliness, but sufficiently distinguished by its expres-

sion of invincible assurance; his person, too, though neither striking for its grace nor its deformity, attracted notice from the insolence of his deportment. His manners, haughty and supercilious, marked the high opinion he cherished of his own importance; and his air and address, at once bold and negligent, announced his happy perfection in the character at which he aimed, that of an accomplished man of the town.

The moment Cecilia appeared, she became the object of his attention, though neither with the look of admiration due to her beauty, nor yet with that of curiosity excited by her novelty, but with the scrutinizing observation of a man on the point of making a bargain, who views with fault-seeking eyes the property he means to cheapen.

Cecilia, wholly unused to an examination so little ceremonious, shrunk abashed from his regards: but his conversation was not less displeasing to her than his looks; his principal subjects, which were horse-racing, losses at play, and disputes at gaming-tables, could afford her but little amusement, because she could not understand them; and the episodes with which they were occasionally interspersed, consisting chiefly of comparative strictures upon celebrated beauties, hints of impending bankruptcies, and witticisms upon recent divorces, were yet more disagreeable to her, because more intelligible. Wearied, therefore, with uninteresting anecdotes, and offended with injudicious subjects of pleasantry, she waited with impatience for the moment of retiring; but Mrs. Harrel, less eager, because better entertained, was in no haste to remove, and therefore she was compelled to remain quiet, till they were both obliged to arise, in order to fulfil their engagement with Mrs. Mears.

As they went together to the house of that lady, in Mrs. Harrel's vis-à-vis, Cecilia, not doubting but their opinions concerning the Baronet would accord, instantly and openly declared her disapprobation of everything he had uttered; but Mrs. Harrel, far from confirming her expectations, only said, "I am sorry you don't like him, for he is almost always with us."

"Do you like him, then, yourself?"

"Extremely; he is very entertaining and clever, and knows the world."

"How judiciously do you praise him!" cried Cecilia; "and how long might you deliberate before you could add another word to his panegyric!"

Mrs. Harrel, satisfied to commend, without even attempting to vindicate him, was soon content to change the subject; and Cecilia, though much concerned that the husband of her friend had made so disgraceful an election of a favourite, yet hoped that the lenity of Mrs. Harrel resulted from her desire to excuse his choice, not from her own approbation.

CHAPTER V.

AN ASSEMBLY.

MRS. MEARS, whose character was of that common sort which renders delineation superfluous, received them with the customary forms of good breeding.

Mrs. Harrel soon engaged herself at a card-table: and Cecilia, who declined playing, was seated next to Miss Leeson, who arose to return the courtesy she made in advancing to her, but that past, did not again even look at her.

Cecilia, though fond of conversation and formed for society, was too diffident to attempt speaking where so little encouraged; they both, therefore, continued silent, till Sir Robert Floyer, Mr. Harrel, and Mr. Arnott entered the room together, and all at the same time advanced to Cecilia.

"What," cried Mr. Harrel, "don't you choose to play, Miss Beverley?"

"I flatter myself," cried Mr. Arnott, "that Miss Beverley never plays at all, for then, in one thing, I shall have the honour to resemble her."

"Very seldom, indeed," answered Cecilia, "and consequently very ill."

"O, you must take a few lessons," said Mr. Harrel, "Sir Robert Floyer, I am sure, will be proud to instruct you."

Sir Robert, who had placed himself opposite to her, and was staring full in her face, made a slight inclination of his head, and said, "Certainly."

"I should be a very unpromising pupil," returned Cecilia, "for I fear I should not only want diligence to improve, but desire."

"O, you will learn better things," said Mr. Harrel; "we have had you yet but three days amongst us—in three months we shall see the difference."

"I hope not," cried Mr. Arnott, "I earnestly hope there will be none!"

Mr. Harrel now joined another party; and Mr. Arnott seeing no seat vacant near that of Cecilia, moved round to the back of her chair, where he patiently stood for the rest of the evening. But Sir Robert still kept his post, and still, without troubling himself to speak, kept his eyes fixed upon the same object.

Cecilia, offended by his boldness, looked a thousand ways to avoid him; but her embarrassment, by giving greater play to her features, served only to keep awake an attention which might otherwise have wearied. She was almost tempted to move her chair round and face Mr. Arnott, but though she wished to show her disapprobation of the Baronet, she had not yet been reconciled by fashion to turning her back upon the company at large, for the indulgence of conversing with some particular person; a fashion which to unaccustomed observers seems rude and repulsive, but which, when once adopted, carries with it imperceptibly its own recommendation, in the ease, convenience, and freedom which it promotes.

Thus disagreeably stationed, she found but little assistance from the neighbourhood of Mr. Arnott, since even his own desire of conversing with her, was swallowed up by an anxious and involuntary impulse to watch the looks and motions of Sir Robert.

At length, quite tired of sitting as if merely an object to be gazed at, she determined to attempt entering into conversation with Miss Leeson.

The difficulty, however, was not inconsiderable how, to make the attack; she was unacquainted with her friends and connections, uninformed of her way of thinking, or her way of life, ignorant even of the sound of her voice, and chilled by the coldness of her aspect: yet, having no other alternative, she was more willing to encounter the

forbidding looks of this lady, than to continue silently abashed under the scrutinizing eyes of Sir Robert.

After much deliberation with what subject to begin, she remembered that Miss Larolles had been present the first time they had met, and thought it probable they might be acquainted with each other; and, therefore, bending forward, she ventured to inquire if she had lately seen that young lady?

Miss Leeson, in a voice alike inexpressive of satisfaction or displeasure, quietly answered, "No, ma'am."

Cecilia, discouraged by this conciseness, was a few minutes silent; but the perseverance of Sir Robert in staring at her, exciting her own in trying to avoid his eyes, she exerted herself so far as to add, "Does Mrs. Mears expect Miss Larolles here this evening?"

Miss Leeson, without raising her head, gravely replied, "I don't know, ma'am."

All was now to be done over again, and a new subject to be started, for she could suggest nothing further to ask concerning Miss Larolles.

Cecilia had seen little of life, but that little she had well marked, and her observation had taught her, that among fashionable people, public places seemed a never-failing source of conversation and entertainment: upon this topic, therefore, she hoped for better success; and as to those who have spent more time in the country than in London no place of amusement is so interesting as a theatre, she opened the subject she had so happily suggested, by an enquiry whether any new play had lately come out?

Miss Leeson, with the same dryness, only answered, "Indeed, I can't tell."

Another pause now followed, and the spirits of Cecilia were considerably dampt; but happening accidentally to recollect the name of Almack,[1] she presently revived, and

[1] Almack's (or Willis's Rooms) in King Street, St. James's, were opened in 1765 by a Scotchman, who kept the Thatched House Tavern in St. James's Street.

"There is now opened at Almack's, in three very elegant new-built rooms, a ten guinea subscription, for which you have a ball and a supper once a week for twelve weeks. . . . . Almack's Scotch face, in a bag-wig, waiting at supper would divert you, as would his lady, in a sack, making tea and curtseying to the duchesses."—*Gilly Williams to George Selwyn*, 1765.

congratulating herself that she should now be able to speak of a place too fashionable for disdain, she asked her, in a manner somewhat more assured, if she was a subscriber to his assemblies?

"Yes, ma'am."

"Do you go to them constantly?"

"No, ma'am."

Again they were both silent. And now, tired of finding the ill success of each particular enquiry, she thought a more general one might obtain an answer less laconic, and therefore begged she would inform her what was the most fashionable place of diversion for the present season?

This question, however, cost Miss Leeson no more trouble than any which had preceded it, for she only replied, "Indeed, I don't know."

Cecilia now began to sicken of her attempt, and for some minutes to give it up as hopeless; but afterwards, when she reflected how frivolous were the questions she had asked, she felt more inclined to pardon the answers she had received, and in a short time to fancy she had mistaken contempt for stupidity, and to grow less angry with Miss Leeson than ashamed of herself.

This supposition excited her to make yet another trial of her talents for conversation; and therefore, summoning all the courage in her power, she modestly apologized for the liberty she was taking, and then begged her permission to enquire whether there was anything new in the literary way that she thought worth recommending?

Miss Leeson now turned her eyes towards her, with a look that implied a doubt whether she had heard aright; and when the attentive attitude of Cecilia confirmed her question, surprise for a few instants took place of insensibility, and with rather more spirit than she had yet shown, she answered, "Indeed, I know nothing of the matter."

Cecilia was now utterly disconcerted; and half angry with herself, and wholly provoked with her sullen neighbour, she resolved to let nothing in future provoke her to a similar trial with so unpromising a subject.

She had not, however, much longer to endure the examination of Sir Robert, who being pretty well satisfied with staring, turned upon his heel, and was striding out of the

room, when he was stopt by Mr. Gosport, who for some time had been watching him.

Mr. Gosport was a man of good parts, and keen satire; minute in his observations, and ironical in his expressions.

"So you don't play, Sir Robert?" he cried.

"What here? No, I am going to Brookes's."

"But how do you like Harrel's ward? You have taken a pretty good survey of her."

"Why, faith, I don't know; but not much, I think; she's a devilish fine woman too; but she has no spirit, no life."

"Did you try her? Have you talked to her?"

"Not I, truly!"

"Nay, then, how do you mean to judge of her?"

"O, faith, that's all over now; one never thinks of talking to the women by way of trying them."

"What other method, then, have you adopted?"

"None."

"None? Why then how do you go on?"

"Why they talk to us. The women take all that trouble upon themselves now."

"And pray how long may you have commenced *fade macaroni?* for this is a part of your character with which I was not acquainted."

"O, hang it, 'tis not from *ton;* no, it's merely from laziness. Who the d—l will fatigue himself with dancing attendance upon the women, when keeping them at a distance makes them dance attendance upon us?"

Then, stalking from him to Mr. Harrel, he took him by the arm, and they left the room together.

Mr. Gosport now advanced to Cecilia, and addressing her so as not to be heard by Miss Leeson, said, "I have been wishing to approach you some time, but the fear that you are already overpowered by the loquacity of your fair neighbour, makes me cautious of attempting to engage you."

"You mean," said Cecilia, "to laugh at *my* loquacity, and indeed its ill success has rendered it sufficiently ridiculous."

"Are you, then, yet to learn," cried he, "that there are certain young ladies who make it a rule never to speak but

to their own cronies? Of this class is Miss Leeson, and till you get into her particular coterie, you must never expect to hear from her a word of two syllables. The TON misses, as they are called, who now infest the town, are in two divisions, the SUPERCILIOUS, and the VOLUBLE. The SUPERCILIOUS, like Miss Leeson, are silent, scornful, languid, and affected, and disdain all converse but with those of their own set; the VOLUBLE, like Miss Larolles, are flirting, communicative, restless, and familiar, and attack, without the smallest ceremony, every one they think worthy their notice. But this they have in common, that at home they think of nothing but dress, abroad, of nothing but admiration, and that everywhere they hold in supreme contempt all but themselves."

"Probably, then," said Cecilia, "I have passed, to-night, for one of the VOLUBLES; however, all the advantage has been with the SUPERCILIOUS, for I have suffered a total repulse."

"Are you sure, however, you have not talked too well for her?"

"O, a child of five years old ought to have been whipt for not talking better!"

"But it is not capacity alone you are to consult when you talk with misses of the TON; were their understandings only to be considered, they would indeed be wonderfully easy of access! in order, therefore, to render their commerce somewhat difficult, they will only be pleased by an observance of their humours; which are ever most various and most exuberant where the intellects are weakest and least cultivated. I have, however, a receipt which I have found infallible for engaging the attention of young ladies, of whatsoever character or denomination."

"Oh, then," cried Cecilia, "pray favour me with it, for I have here an admirable opportunity to try its efficacy."

"I will give it you," he answered, "with full directions. When you meet with a young lady who seems resolutely determined not to speak, or who, if compelled by a direct question to make some answer, drily gives a brief affirmative, or coldly a laconic negative——"

"A case in point!" interrupted Cecilia.

"Well, thus circumstanced," he continued, "the

remedy I have to propose consists of three topics of discourse."

"Pray what are they?"

"Dress, public places, and love."

Cecilia, half surprised, and half diverted, waited a fuller explanation without giving any interruption.

"These three topics," he continued, "are to answer three purposes, since there are no less than three causes from which the silence of young ladies may proceed: sorrow, affectation, and stupidity."

"Do you then," cried Cecilia, "give nothing at all to modesty?"

"I give much to it," he answered, "as an excuse, nay almost as an equivalent for wit; but for that sullen silence which resists all encouragement, modesty is a mere pretence, not a cause."

"You must, however, be somewhat more explicit, if you mean that I should benefit from your instructions."

"Well then," he answered, "I will briefly enumerate the three causes, with directions for the three methods of cure. To begin with sorrow. The taciturnity which really results from that is attended with an incurable absence of mind, and a total unconsciousness of the observation which it excites; upon this occasion, public places may sometimes be tried in vain, and even dress may fail; but love——"

"Are you sure, then," said Cecilia, with a laugh, "that sorrow has but that one source?"

"By no means," answered he, "for perhaps papa may have been angry, or mama may have been cross; a milliner may have sent a wrong pompoon,[1] or a *chaperon* to an assembly may have been taken ill——"

"Bitter subjects of affliction, indeed! And are these all you allow us?"

"Nay, I speak but of young ladies of fashion, and what of greater importance can befall them? If, therefore, the grief of the fair patient proceeds from papa, mama, or the *chaperon*, then the mention of public places, those endless incentives of displeasure between the old and the young,

[1] A "*pompoon*" is any little ornament of dress, from the woollen ball on a soldier's shako, to a lady's knot, or rosette of riband.

will draw forth her complaints, and her complaints will bring their own cure, for those who lament find speedy consolation. If the milliner has occasioned the calamity, the discussion of dress will have the same effect; should both these medicines fail, love, as I said before, will be found infallible, for you will then have investigated every subject of uneasiness which a youthful female in high life can experience."

"They are greatly obliged to you," cried Cecilia, bowing, "for granting them motives of sorrow so honourable, and I thank you in the name of the whole sex."

"You, madam," said he, returning her bow, "are I hope an exception in the happiest way, that of having no sorrow at all. I come, now, to the silence of affectation, which is presently discernible by the roving of the eye round the room to see if it is heeded, by the sedulous care to avoid an accidental smile, and by the variety of disconsolate attitudes exhibited to the beholders. This species of silence has almost without exception its origin in that babyish vanity which is always gratified by exciting attention, without ever perceiving that it provokes contempt. In these cases, as nature is wholly out of the question, and the mind is guarded against its own feelings, dress and public places are almost certain of failing; but here again love is sure to vanquish. As soon as it is named, attention becomes involuntary, and in a short time a struggling simper discomposes the arrangement of the features, and then the business is presently over, for the young lady is either supporting some system, or opposing some proposition, before she is well aware that she has been cheated out of her sad silence at all."

"So much," said Cecilia, "for sorrow and for affectation. Proceed next to stupidity; for that, in all probability, I shall most frequently encounter."

"That always must be heavy work," returned he, "yet the road is plain, though it is all up-hill. Love, here, may be talked of without exciting any emotion, or provoking any reply, and dress may be dilated upon without producing any other effect than that of attracting a vacant stare; but public places are indubitably certain of success. Dull and heavy characters, incapable of animating from wit or from

reason, because unable to keep pace with them, and void of all internal sources of entertainment, require the stimulation of show, glare, noise, and bustle to interest or awaken them. Talk to them of such subjects, and they adore you; no matter whether you paint to them joy or horror, let there but be action, and they are content; a battle has charms for them equal to a coronation, and a funeral amuses them as much as a wedding."

"I am much obliged to you," said Cecilia, smiling, "for these instructions; yet I must confess I know not how upon the present occasion to make use of them: public places I have already tried, but tried in vain; dress I dare not mention, as I have not yet learned its technical terms—"

"Well, but," interrupted he, "be not desperate; you have yet the third topic unessayed."

"O that," returned she, laughing, "I leave to you."

"Pardon me," cried he, "love is a source of loquacity only with yourselves: when it is started by men, young ladies dwindle into mere listeners. *Simpering* listeners, I confess; but it is only with one another that you will discuss its merits,"

At this time they were interrupted by the approach of Miss Larolles, who, tripping towards Cecilia, exclaimed, "Lord, how glad I am to see you! So you would not go to the auction? Well, you had a prodigious loss, I assure you, All the wardrobe was sold, and all Lady Belgrade's trinkets. I never saw such a collection of sweet things in my life. I was ready to cry that I could not bid for half an hundred of them. I declare I was kept in an agony the whole morning. I would not but have been there for the world. Poor Lady Belgrade! you really can't conceive how I was shocked for her. All her beautiful things sold for almost nothing. I assure you, if you had seen how they went, you would have lost all patience. It's a thousand pities you were not there."

"On the contrary," said Cecilia, "I think I had a very fortunate escape, for the loss of patience without the acquisition of the trinkets, would have been rather mortifying."

"Yes," said Mr. Gosport; "but when you have lived some time longer in this commercial city, you will find the

exchange of patience for mortification the most common and constant traffic among its inhabitants."

"Pray have you been here long?" cried Miss Larolles, "for I have been to twenty places, wondering I did not meet with you before. But whereabouts is Mrs. Mears? O, I see her now; I'm sure there's no mistaking her; I could know her by that old red gown half a mile off. Did you ever see such a frightful thing in your life? And it's never off her back. I believe she sleeps in it. I am sure I have seen her in nothing else all winter. It quite tires one's eye. She's a monstrous shocking dresser. But do you know, I have met with the most provoking thing in the world this evening? I declare it has made me quite sick. I was never in such a passion in my life. You can conceive nothing like it."

"Like what?" cried Cecilia, laughing, "your passion or your provocation?"

"Why I'll tell you what it was, and then you shall judge if it was not quite past endurance. You must know I commissioned a particular friend of mine, Miss Moffat, to buy me a trimming when she went to Paris; well, she sent it me over about a month ago by Mr. Meadows, and it's the sweetest thing you ever saw in your life; but I would not make it up, because there was not a creature in town, so I thought to bring it out quite new in about a week's time, for you know any thing does till after Christmas. Well, to-night at Lady Jane Dranet's, who should I meet but Miss Moffat! She had been in town some days, but so monstrously engaged, I could never find her at home. Well, I was quite delighted to see her, for you must know she's a prodigious favourite with me; so I ran up to her in a great hurry to shake hands, and what do you think was the first thing that struck my eyes? Why just such a trimming as my own, upon a nasty odious gown, and half dirty! Can you conceive anything so distressing? I could have cried with pleasure."

"Why so?" said Cecilia. "If her trimming is dirty, yours will look the more delicate."

"O lord, but it's making it seem quite an old thing! half the town will get something like it. And I quite ruined myself to buy it. I declare I don't think any thing

was ever half so mortifying. It distressed me so I could hardly speak to her. If she had stayed a month or two longer I should not have minded it, but it was the cruelest thing in the world to come over just now. I wish the Custom-house officers had kept all her clothes till summer."

"The wish is tender, indeed," said Cecilia, "for a *particular friend*."

Mrs. Mears now rising from the card-table, Miss Larolles tript away to pay her compliments to her.

"Here, at least," cried Cecilia, "no receipt seems requisite for the cure of silence! I would have Miss Larolles be the constant companion of Miss Leeson: they could not but agree admirably, since that SUPERCILIOUS young lady seems determined never to speak; and the VOLUBLE Miss Larolles never to be silent. Were each to borrow something of the other, how greatly would both be the better!"

"The composition would still be a sorry one," answered Mr. Gosport, "for I believe they are equally weak, and equally ignorant; the only difference is, that one, though silly, is quick, the other, though deliberate, is stupid. Upon a short acquaintance, that heaviness which leaves to others the whole weight of discourse, and whole search of entertainment, is the most fatiguing, but, upon a longer intimacy, even that is less irksome and less offensive, than the flippancy which hears nothing but itself."

Mrs. Harrel arose now to depart, and Cecilia, not more tired of the beginning of the evening than entertained with its conclusion, was handed to the carriage by Mr. Arnott.

CHAPTER VI.

A BREAKFAST.

THE next morning, during breakfast, a servant acquainted Cecilia that a young gentleman was in the hall, who begged to speak with her. She desired he might be admitted; and Mrs. Harrel, laughing, asked if she ought not to quit the room; while Mr. Arnott, with even more

than his usual gravity, directed his eye towards the door to watch who should enter.

Neither of them, however, received any satisfaction when it was opened, for the gentleman who made his appearance was unknown to both; but great was the amazement of Cecilia, though little her emotion, when she saw Mr. Morrice!

He came forward with an air of the most profound respect for the company in general, and obsequiously advancing to Cecilia, made an earnest enquiry into her health after her journey, and hoped she had heard good news from her friends in the country.

Mrs. Harrel, naturally concluding both from his visit and behaviour, that he was an acquaintance of some intimacy, very civilly offered him a seat and some breakfast, which, very frankly, he accepted. But Mr. Arnott, who already felt the anxiety of a rising passion which was too full of veneration to be sanguine, looked at him with uneasiness, and waited his departure with impatience.

Cecilia began to imagine he had been commissioned to call upon her with some message from Mr. Monckton: for she knew not how to suppose that merely and accidentally having spent an hour or two in the same room with her, would authorize a visiting acquaintance. Mr. Morrice, however, had a facility the most happy of reconciling his pretensions to his inclination; and therefore she soon found that the apology she had suggested appeared to him unnecessary. To lead, however, to the subject from which she expected his excuse, she enquired how long he had left Suffolk?

"But yesterday noon, ma'am," he answered, "or I should certainly have taken the liberty to wait upon you before."

Cecilia, who had only been perplexing herself to devise some reason why he came at all, now looked at him with a grave surprise, which would totally have abashed a man whose courage had been less, or whose expectations had been greater; but Mr. Morrice, though he hazarded every danger upon the slightest chance of hope, knew too well the weakness of his claims to be confident of success, and had been too familiar with rebuffs to be much hurt by re-

ceiving them. He might possibly have something to gain, but he knew he had nothing to lose.

"I had the pleasure," he continued, "to leave all our friends well, except poor Lady Margaret, and she has had an attack of the asthma; yet she would not have a physician, though Mr. Monckton would fain have persuaded her: however, I believe the old lady knows better things." And he looked archly at Cecilia: but perceiving that the insinuation gave her nothing but disgust, he changed his tone, and added, "It is amazing how well they live together; nobody would imagine the disparity in their years. Poor old lady! Mr. Monckton will really have a great loss of her when she dies."

"A loss of her!" repeated Mrs. Harrel; "I am sure she is an exceeding ill-natured old woman. When I lived at Bury, I was always frightened out of my wits at the sight of her."

"Why, indeed, ma'am," said Morrice, "I must own her appearance is rather against her: I had myself a great aversion to her at first sight. But the house is cheerful—very cheerful; I like to spend a few days there now and then of all things. Miss Bennet, too, is agreeable enough, and—"

"Miss Bennet agreeable!" cried Mrs. Harrel; "I think she's the most odious creature I ever knew in my life; a nasty, spiteful old maid!"

"Why indeed, ma'am, as you say," answered Morrice, "she is not very young; and as to her temper, I confess I know very little about it; and Mr. Monckton is likely enough to try it, for he is pretty severe."

"Mr. Monckton," cried Cecilia, extremely provoked at hearing him censured by a man she thought highly honoured in being permitted to approach him, "whenever *I* have been his guest, has merited from me nothing but praise and gratitude."

"O," cried Morrice eagerly, "there is not a more worthy man in the world! he has so much wit, so much politeness! I don't know a more charming man any where than my friend Mr. Monckton."

Cecilia now perceiving that the opinions of her new acquaintance were as pliant as his bows, determined to pay

him no further attention, and hoped by sitting silent to force from him the business of his visit, if any he had, or if, as she now suspected, he had none, to weary him into a retreat.

But this plan, though it would have succeeded with herself, failed with Mr. Morrice, who to a stock of good-humour that made him always ready to oblige others, added an equal portion of insensibility that hardened him against all indignity. Finding, therefore, that Cecilia, to whom his visit was intended, seemed already satisfied with its length, he prudently forbore to torment her; but perceiving that the lady of the house was more accessible, he quickly made a transfer of his attention, and addressed his discourse to her with as much pleasure as if his only view had been to see her, and as much ease as if he had known her all his life.

With Mrs. Harrel this conduct was not injudicious; she was pleased with his assiduity, amused with his vivacity, and sufficiently satisfied with his understanding. They conversed, therefore, upon pretty equal terms, and neither of them were yet tired, when they were interrupted by Mr. Harrel, who came into the room to ask if they had seen or heard any thing of Sir Robert Floyer?

"No," answered Mrs. Harrel, "nothing at all."

"I wish he was hanged," returned he, "for he has kept me waiting this hour. He made me promise not to ride out till he called, and now he'll stay till the morning is over."

"Pray where does he live, sir?" cried Morrice, starting from his seat.

"In Cavendish-square, sir," answered Mr. Harrel, looking at him with much surprise.

Not a word more said Morrice, but scampered out of the room.

"Pray who is this genius?" cried Mr. Harrel, "and what has he run away for?"

"Upon my word I know nothing at all of him," said Mrs. Harrel; "he is a visitor of Miss Beverley's."

"And I, too," said Cecilia, "might almost equally disclaim all knowledge of him; for though I once saw, I never was introduced to him."

She then began a relation of her meeting him at Mr. Monckton's house, and had hardly concluded it, before again and quite out of breath, he made his appearance.

"Sir Robert Floyer, sir," said he to Mr. Harrel, "will be here in two minutes."

"I hope, sir," said Mr. Harrel, "you have not given yourself the trouble of going to him?"

"No, sir, it has given me nothing but pleasure; a run these cold mornings is the thing I like best."

"Sir, you are extremely good," said Mr. Harrel, "but I had not the least intention of your taking such a walk upon my account."

He then begged him to be seated, to rest himself, and to take some refreshment; which civilities he received without scruple.

"But, Miss Beverley," said Mr. Harrel, turning to Cecilia, "you don't tell me what you think of my friend."

"What friend, sir?"

"Why, Sir Robert Floyer; I observed he never quitted you a moment while he stayed at Mrs. Mears's."

"His stay, however, was too short," said Cecilia, "to allow me to form a fair opinion of him."

"But, perhaps," cried Morrice, "it was long enough to allow you to form a *foul* one."

Cecilia could not forbear laughing to hear the truth thus accidentally blundered out; but Mr. Harrel, looking very little pleased, said, "Surely you can find no fault with him; he is one of the most fashionable men I know."

"My finding fault with him, then," said Cecilia, "will only further prove what I believe is already pretty evident, that I am yet a novice in the art of admiration."

Mr. Arnott, animating at this speech, glided behind her chair, and said, "I knew you could not like him! I knew it from the turn of your mind;—I knew it even from your countenance!"

Soon after, Sir Robert Floyer arrived.

"You are a pretty fellow, a'n't you," cried Mr. Harrel, "to keep me waiting so long?"

"I could not come a moment sooner; I hardly expected to get here at all, for my horse has been so confounded resty, I could not tell how to get him along."

"Do you come on horseback through the streets, Sir Robert?" asked Mrs. Harrel.

"Sometimes; when I am lazy. But what the d—l is

the matter with him I don't know; he has started at everything. I suspect there has been some foul play with him."

"Is he at the door, sir?" cried Morrice.

"Yes," answered Sir Robert,

"Then I'll tell you what's the matter with him in a minute;" and away again ran Morrice.

"What time did you get off last night, Harrel?" said Sir Robert.

"Not very early; but you were too much engaged to miss me. By the way," lowering his voice, "what do you think I lost?"

"I can't tell, indeed, but I know what I gained; I have not had such a run of luck this winter."

They then went up to a window to carry on their enquiries more privately.

At the words *what do you think I lost*, Cecilia, half starting, cast her eyes uneasily upon Mrs. Harrel, but perceived not the least change in her countenance. Mr. Arnott, however, seemed as little pleased as herself, and from a similar sensation looked anxiously at his sister.

Morrice now returning, called out, "He's had a fall, I assure you!"

"Curse him!" cried Sir Robert, "what shall I do now? He cost me the d—l and all of money, and I have not had him a twelvemonth. Can you lend me a horse for this morning, Harrel?"

"No, I have not one that will do for you. You must send to Astley."[1]

"Who can I send? John must take care of this."

"I'll go, sir," cried Morrice, "if you'll give me the commission."

"By no means, sir," said Sir Robert, "I can't think of your having such an office."

"It is the thing in the world I like best," answered he; "I understand horses, and had rather go to Astley's than any where."

The matter was now settled in a few minutes, and having

[1] Philip Astley, born in 1742, was a light horseman in the 15th, or General Elliott's, Regiment. In 1774, he began a riding-school in the Westminster Bridge Road, which in 1780 was turned into a covered amphitheatre.

received his directions, and an invitatation to dinner, Morrice danced off, with a heart yet lighter than his heels.

"Why, Miss Beverley," said Mr. Harrel, "this friend of yours is the most obliging gentleman I ever met with; there was no avoiding asking him to dinner."

"Remember, however," said Cecilia, who was involuntarily diverted at the successful officiousness of her new acquaintance, "that if you receive him henceforth as your guest, he obtains admission through his own merits, and not through my interest."

At dinner, Morrice, who failed not to accept the invitation of Mr. Harrel, was the gayest, and indeed the happiest man in the company: the effort he had made to fasten himself upon Cecilia as an acquaintance, had not, it is true, from herself met with much encouragement; but he knew the chances were against him when he made the trial, and therefore the prospect of gaining admission into such a house as Mr. Harrel's, was not only sufficient to make amends for what scarcely amounted to a disappointment, but a subject of serious comfort from the credit of the connection, and of internal exultation at his own management and address.

In the evening, the ladies, as usual, went to a private assembly, and, as usual, were attended to it by Mr. Arnott. The other gentlemen had engagements elsewhere.

CHAPTER VII.

A PROJECT.

SEVERAL days passed on nearly in the same manner; the mornings were all spent in gossipping, shopping, and dressing, and the evenings were regularly appropriated to public places, or large parties of company.

Meanwhile Mr. Arnott lived almost entirely in Portman-square; he slept, indeed, at his own lodgings, but he boarded wholly with Mr. Harrel, whose house he never for a moment quitted till night, except to attend Cecilia and his sister in their visitings and rambles.

Mr. Arnott was a young man of unexceptionable character, and of a disposition mild, serious, and benignant: his principles and blameless conduct obtained the universal esteem of the world, but his manners, which were rather too precise, joined to an uncommon gravity of countenance and demeanour, made his society rather permitted as a duty, than sought as a pleasure.

The charms of Cecilia had forcibly, suddenly, and deeply penetrated his heart; he only lived in her presence, away from her he hardly existed: the emotions she excited were rather those of adoration than of love, for he gazed upon her beauty till he thought her more than human, and hung upon her accents till all speech seemed impertinent to him but her own. Yet so small were his expectations of success, that not even to his sister did he hint at the situation of his heart: happy in an easy access to her, he contented himself with seeing, hearing and watching her, beyond which bounds he formed not any plan, and scarce indulged any hope.

Sir Robert Floyer, too, was a frequent visitor in Portman-square, where he dined almost daily. Cecilia was chagrined at seeing so much of him, and provoked to find herself almost constantly the object of his unrestrained examination; she was, however, far more seriously concerned for Mrs. Harrel, when she discovered that this favourite friend of her husband was an unprincipled spendthrift, and an extravagant gamester: for as he was the inseparable companion of Mr. Harrel, she dreaded the consequence both of his influence and his example.

She saw, too, with an amazement that daily increased, the fatigue, yet fascination of a life of pleasure: Mr. Harrel seemed to consider his own house merely as an hôtel, where at any hour of the night he might disturb the family to claim admittance, where letters and messages might be left for him, where he dined when no other dinner was offered him, and where, when he made an appointment, he was to be met with. His lady, too, though more at home, was not therefore more solitary; her acquaintance were numerous, expensive and idle, and every moment not actually spent in company, was scrupulously devoted to making arrangements for that purpose.

In a short time Cecilia, who every day had hoped that the next would afford her greater satisfaction, but who every day found the present no better than the former, began to grow weary of eternally running the same round, and to sicken at the irksome repetition of unremitting yet uninteresting dissipation. She saw nobody she wished to see, as she had met with nobody for whom she could care; for though sometimes those with whom she mixed appeared to be amiable, she knew that their manners, like their persons, were in their best array, and therefore she had too much understanding to judge decisively of their characters. But what chiefly damped her hopes of forming a friendship with any of the new acquaintance to whom she was introduced, was the observation she herself made, how ill the coldness of their hearts accorded with the warmth of their professions: upon every first meeting, the civilities which were shown her, flattered her into believing she had excited a partiality that a very little time would ripen into affection; the next meeting commonly confirmed the expectation; but the third, and every future one, regularly destroyed it. She found that time added nothing to their fondness, nor intimacy to their sincerity; that the interest in her welfare which appeared to be taken at first sight, seldom, with whatever reason, increased, and often without any abated; that the distinction she at first met with, was no effusion of kindness, but of curiosity, which is scarcely sooner gratified than satiated; and that those who lived always the life into which she had only lately been initiated, were as much harassed with it as herself, though less spirited to relinquish, and more helpless to better it; and that they coveted nothing but what was new, because they had experienced the insufficiency of whatever was familiar.

She began now to regret the loss she sustained in quitting the neighbourhood, and being deprived of the conversation of Mr. Monckton, and yet more earnestly to miss the affection and sigh for the society of Mrs. Charlton, the lady with whom she had long and happily resided at Bury; for she was very soon compelled to give up all expectation of renewing the felicity of her earlier years, by being restored to the friendship of Mrs. Harrel, in whom she had mistaken the kindness of childish intimacy for the

sincerity of chosen affection; and though she saw her credulous error with mortification and displeasure, she regretted it with tenderness and sorrow. "What, at last," cried she, "is human felicity, who has tasted, and where is it to be found? If I, who, to others, seem marked out for even a partial possession of it,—distinguished by fortune, caressed by the world, brought into the circle of high life, and surrounded with splendour, seek without finding, yet losing, scarce know how I miss it!"

Ashamed upon reflection to believe she was considered as an object of envy by others, while repining and discontented herself, she determined no longer to be the only one insensible to the blessings within her reach, but by projecting and adopting some plan of conduct, better suited to her taste and feelings than the frivolous insipidity of her present life, to make at once a more spirited and more worthy use of the affluence, freedom and power which she possessed.

A scheme of happiness at once rational and refined soon presented itself to her imagination. She purposed, for the basis of her plan, to become mistress of her own time, and with this view, to drop all idle and uninteresting acquaintance, who, while they contribute neither to use nor pleasure, make so large a part of the community, that they may properly be called the underminers of existence: she could then show some taste and discernment in her choice of friends, and she resolved to select such only as by their piety could elevate her mind, by their knowledge improve her understanding, or by their accomplishments and manners delight her affections. This regulation, if strictly adhered to, would soon relieve her from the fatigue of receiving many visitors, and therefore she might have all the leisure she could desire for the pursuit of her favourite studies, music and reading.

Having thus, from her own estimation of human perfection, culled whatever was noblest for her society, and from her own ideas of sedentary enjoyments, arranged the occupations of her hours of solitude, she felt fully satisfied with the portion of happiness which her scheme promised to herself, and began next to consider what was due from her to the world.

And not without trembling did she then look forward to the claims which the splendid income she was soon to possess would call upon her to discharge. A strong sense of DUTY, a fervent desire to ACT RIGHT, were the ruling characteristics of her mind: her affluence she therefore considered as a debt contracted with the poor: and her independence, as a tie upon her liberality to pay it with interest.

Many and various, then, soothing to her spirit and grateful to her sensibility, were the scenes which her fancy delineated; now she supported an orphan, now softened the sorrows of a widow, now snatched from iniquity the feeble trembler at poverty, and now rescued from shame the proud struggler with disgrace. The prospect at once exalted her hopes, and enraptured her imagination: she regarded herself as an agent of Charity, and already in idea anticipated the rewards of a good and faithful delegate: so animating are the designs of disinterested benevolence! so pure is the bliss of intellectual philanthropy!

Not immediately, however, could this plan be put in execution; the society she meant to form could not be selected in the house of another, where, though to some she might show a preference, there were none she could reject: nor had she yet the power to indulge, according to the munificence of her wishes, the extensive generosity she projected: these purposes demanded a house of her own, and the unlimited disposal of her fortune, neither of which she could claim till she became of age. That period, however, was only eight months distant, and she pleased herself with the intention of meliorating her plan in the mean time, and preparing to put it in practice.

But though, in common with all the race of still-expecting man, she looked for that happiness in the time to come which the present failed to afford, she had yet the spirit and good sense to determine upon making every effort in her power to render her immediate way of life more useful and contented.

Her first wish therefore, now, was to quit the house of Mr. Harrel, where she neither met with entertainment nor instruction, but was perpetually mortified by seeing the total indifference of the friend in whose society she had hoped for nothing but affection.

The will of her uncle, though it obliged her while underage to live with one of her guardians, left her at liberty to choose and to change amongst them according to her wishes or convenience: she determined, therefore, to make a visit herself to each of them, to observe their manners and way of life, and then, to the best of her judgment, decide with which she could be most contented: resolving, however, not to hint at her intention till it was ripe for execution, and then honestly to confess the reasons of her retreat.

She had acquainted them both of her journey to town the morning after her arrival. She was almost an entire stranger to each of them, as she had not seen Mr. Briggs since she was nine years old, nor Mr. Delvile within the time she could remember.

The very morning that she had settled her proceedings for the arrangement of this new plan, she intended to request the use of Mrs. Harrel's carriage, and to make, without delay, the visits preparatory to her removal: but when she entered the parlour upon a summons to breakfast, her eagerness to quit the house gave way, for the present, to the pleasure she felt at the sight of Mr. Monckton, who was just arrived from Suffolk.

She expressed her satisfaction in the most lively terms, and scrupled not to tell him she had not once been so much pleased since her journey to town, except at her first meeting with Mrs. Harrel.

Mr. Monckton, whose delight was infinitely superior to her own, and whose joy in seeing her was redoubled by the affectionate frankness of her reception, stifled the emotions to which her sight gave rise, and denying himself the solace of expressing his feelings, seemed much less charmed than herself at the meeting, and suffered no word nor look to escape him, beyond what could be authorised by friendly civility.

He then renewed with Mrs. Harrel an acquaintance which had been formed before her marriage, but which he had dropt when her distance from Cecilia, upon whose account alone he had thought it worth cultivation, made it no longer of use to him. She afterwards introduced her brother to him; and a conversation very interesting to both the ladies took place, concerning several families with

which they had been formerly connected, as well as the neighbourhood at large in which they had lately dwelt.

Very little was the share taken by Mr. Arnott in these accounts and enquiries; the unaffected joy with which Cecilia had received Mr. Monckton, had struck him with a sensation of envy as involuntary as it was painful: he did not, indeed, suspect that gentleman's secret views; no reason for suspicion was obvious, and his penetration sunk not deeper than appearances; he knew, too, that he was married, and therefore no jealousy occurred to him; but still she had smiled upon him!—and he felt that to purchase for himself a smile of so much sweetness, he would have sacrificed almost all else that was valuable to him upon earth.

With an attention infinitely more accurate, Mr. Monckton had returned his observations. The uneasiness of his mind was apparent, and the anxious watchfulness of his eyes plainly manifested whence it arose. From a situation, indeed, which permitted an intercourse the most constant and unrestrained with such an object as Cecilia, nothing less could be expected, and therefore he considered his admiration as inevitable; all that remained to be discovered, was the reception it had met from his fair enslaver. Nor was he here long in doubt; he soon saw that she was not merely free from all passion herself, but had so little watched Mr. Arnott as to be unconscious she had inspired any.

Yet was his own serenity, though apparently unmoved, little less disturbed in secret than that of his rival; he did not think him a formidable candidate, but he dreaded the effect of intimacy, fearing she might first grow accustomed to his attentions, and then become pleased with them: he apprehended, also, the influence of his sister, and of Mr. Harrel in his favour; and though he had no difficulty to persuade himself that any offer he might now make would be rejected without hesitation, he knew too well the insidious properties of perseverance, to see him, without inquietude, situated so advantageously.

The morning was far advanced before he took leave, yet he found no opportunity of discoursing with Cecilia, though he impatiently desired to examine into the state of

her mind, and to discover whether her London journey had added any fresh difficulties to the success of his long-concerted scheme. But as Mrs. Harrel invited him to dinner, he hoped the afternoon would be more propitious to his wishes.

Cecilia, too, was eager to communicate to him her favourite project, and to receive his advice with respect to its execution. She had long been used to his counsel, and she was now more than ever solicitous to obtain it, because she considered him as the only person in London who was interested in her welfare.

He saw, however, no promise of better success when he made his appearance at dinner time, for not only Mr. Arnott was already arrived, but Sir Robert Floyer; and he found Cecilia so much the object of their mutual attention, that he had still less chance than in the morning of speaking to her unheard.

Yet was he not idle; the sight of Sir Robert gave abundant employment to his penetration, which was immediately at work, to discover the motive of his visit: but this, with all his sagacity, was not easily decided; for though the constant direction of his eyes towards Cecilia, proved, at least, that he was not insensible of her beauty, his carelessness whether or not she was hurt by his examination, the little pains he took to converse with her, and the invariable assurance and negligence of his manners, seemed strongly to demonstrate an indifference to the sentiments he inspired, totally incompatible with the solicitude of affection.

In Cecilia he had nothing to observe but what his knowledge of her character prepared him to expect, a shame no less indignant than modest at the freedom with which she saw herself surveyed.

Very little, therefore, was the satisfaction which this visit procured him, for soon after dinner the ladies retired; and as they had an early engagement for the evening, the gentlemen received no summons to their tea-table. But he contrived, before they quitted the room, to make an appointment for attending them the next morning to a rehearsal of a new serious opera.

He stayed not after their departure longer than decency

required; for too much in earnest was his present pursuit, to fit him for such conversation as the house in Cecilia's absence could afford him.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OPERA REHEARSAL.

THE next day, between eleven and twelve o'clock, Mr. Monckton was again in Portman-square; he found, as he expected, both the ladies, and he found, as he feared, Mr. Arnott prepared to be of their party. He had, however, but little time to repine at this intrusion, before he was disturbed by another; for, in a few minutes, they were joined by Sir Robert Floyer, who also declared his intention of accompanying them to the Haymarket.[1]

Mr. Monckton, to disguise his chagrin, pretended he was in great haste to set off, lest they should be too late for the overture: they were, therefore, quitting the breakfast room, when they were stopt by the appearance of Mr. Morrice.

The surprise which the sight of him gave to Mr. Monckton was extreme; he knew that he was unacquainted with Mr. Harrel, for he remembered they were strangers to each other when they lately met at his house; he concluded, therefore, that Cecilia was the object of his visit, but he could frame no conjecture under what pretence.

The easy terms upon which he seemed with all the family by no means diminished his amazement; for when Mrs. Harrel expressed some concern that she was obliged to go out, he gaily begged her not to mind him, assuring her he could not have stayed two minutes, and promising, unasked, to call again the next day: and when she added,

[1] This was the theatre built by Sir John Vanbrugh. It was opened in 1705, and burnt down in 1789. "The establishment of the Italian Opera in England is usually dated from the arrival of Händel, and the appearance of his first opera, 'Rinaldo,' in 1711."—CUNNINGHAM'S *Handbook for London*.

"We would not hurry away so, only we are going to a rehearsal of an opera," he exclaimed with quickness, "A rehearsal!—are you really? I have a great mind to go too!"

Then, perceiving Mr. Monckton, he bowed to him with great respect, and enquired, with no little solemnity, how he had left Lady Margaret, hoped she was perfectly recovered from her late indisposition, and asked sundry questions with regard to her plan for the winter.

This discourse was ill constructed for rendering his presence desirable to Mr. Monckton; he answered him very drily, and again pressed their departure.

"O," cried Morrice, "there's no occasion for such haste; the rehearsal does not begin till one."

"You are mistaken, sir!" said Mr. Monckton; "it is to begin at twelve o'clock."

"O, ay, very true," returned Morrice; "I had forgot the dances, and I suppose they are to be rehearsed first. Pray, Miss Beverley, did you ever see any dances rehearsed?"

"No, sir."

"You'll be excessively entertained, then, I assure you. It's the most comical thing in the world to see those signors and signoras cutting capers in a morning. And the *figuranti* will divert you beyond measure; you never saw such a shabby set in your life: but the most amusing thing is to look in their faces, for all the time they are jumping and skipping about the stage as if they could not stand still for joy, they look as sedate and as dismal as if they were so many undertaker's men."

"Not a word against dancing!" cried Sir Robert; "it's the only thing carries one to the Opera; and I am sure it's the only thing one minds at it."

The two ladies were then handed to Mrs. Harrel's *vis-à-vis;* and the gentlemen, joined without further ceremony by Mr. Morrice, followed them to the Haymarket.

The rehearsal was not begun, and Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia secured themselves a box upon the stage, from which the gentlemen of their party took care not to be very distant.

They were soon perceived by Mr. Gosport, who instantly

entered into conversation with Cecilia. Miss Larolles, who with some other ladies came soon after into the next box, looked out to curtsey and nod, with her usual readiness, at Mrs. Harrel, but took not any notice of Cecilia, though she made the first advances.

"What's the matter now?" cried Mr. Gosport; "have you affronted your little prattling friend?"

"Not with my own knowledge," answered Cecilia; "perhaps she does not recollect me."

Just then Miss Larolles, tapping at the door, came in from the next box to speak to Mrs. Harrel; with whom she stood chatting and laughing some minutes, without seeming to perceive that Cecilia was of her party.

"Why what have you done to the poor girl?" whispered Mr. Gosport; "did you talk more than herself when you saw her last?"

"Would that have been possible?" cried Cecilia. "However, I still fancy she does not know me."

She then stood up, which making Miss Larolles involuntarily turn towards her, she again curtsied; a civility which that young lady scarce deigned to return, before, bridling with an air of resentment, she hastily looked another way, and then, nodding good-humouredly at Mrs. Harrel, hurried back to her party.

Cecilia, much amazed, said to Mr. Gosport, "See now how great was our presumption in supposing this young lady's loquacity always at our devotion!"

"Ah, madam!" cried he, laughing, "there is no permanency, no consistency in the world! no, not even in the tongue of a VOLUBLE! and if that fails, upon what may we depend?"

"But seriously," said Cecilia, "I am sorry I have offended her, and the more because I so little know how, that I can offer her no apology."

"Will you appoint me your envoy? Shall I demand the cause of these hostilities?"

She thanked him, and he followed Miss Larolles; who was now addressing herself with great earnestness to Mr. Meadows, the gentleman with whom she was conversing when Cecilia first saw her in Portman-square. He stopt a moment to let her finish her speech, which, with no little

spirit, she did in these words, "I never knew any thing like it in my life; but I sha'n't put up with such airs, I assure her!"

Mr. Meadows made not any other return to her harangue, but stretching himself with a languid smile and yawning: Mr. Gosport, therefore, seizing the moment of cessation, said, "Miss Larolles, I hear a strange report about you."

"Do you?" returned she, with quickness; "pray what is it? something monstrous impertinent, I dare say;—however, I assure you it i'n't true."

"Your assurance," cried he, "carries conviction indisputable, for the report was that you had left off talking."

"O, was that all," cried she, disappointed; "I thought it had been something about Mr. Sawyer, for I declare I have been plagued so about him, I am quite sick of his name."

"And for my part, I never heard it! so fear nothing from me upon his account."

"Lord, Mr. Gosport, how can you say so! I am sure you must know about the festino that night, for it was all over the town in a moment."

"What festino?"

"Well, only conceive how provoking!—Why, I know nothing else was talked of for a month!"

"You are most formidably stout this morning! It is not two minutes since I saw you fling the gauntlet at Miss Beverley, and yet you are already prepared for another antagonist."

"O, as to Miss Beverley, I must really beg you not to mention her; she has behaved so impertinently, that I don't ever intend to speak to her again."

"Why, what has she done?"

"O she's been so rude you've no notion. I'll tell you how it was. You must know I met her at Mrs. Harrel's the day she came to town, and the very next morning I waited on her myself, for I would not send a ticket, because I really wished to be civil to her; well, the day after, she never came near me, though I called upon her again; however, I did not take any notice of that; but when the third day came, and I found she had not even

sent me a ticket, I thought it monstrous ill bred indeed; and now there has past more than a week, and yet she has never called: so I suppose she don't like me; so I shall drop her acquaintance."

Mr. Gosport, satisfied now with the subject of her complaint, returned to Cecilia, and informed her of the heavy charge which was brought against her.

"I am glad, at least, to know my crime," said she; "for otherwise I should certainly have sinned on in ignorance, as I must confess I never thought of returning her visits: but even if I had, I should not have supposed I had yet lost much time."

"I beg your pardon there," said Mrs. Harrel; "a first visit ought to be returned always by the third day."

"Then have I an unanswerable excuse," said Cecilia; "for I remember that on the third day I saw her at your house."

"O that's nothing at all to the purpose; you should have waited upon her, or sent her a ticket, just the same as if you had not seen her."

The overture was now begun, and Cecilia declined any further conversation. This was the first opera she had ever heard, yet she was not wholly a stranger to Italian compositions, having assiduously studied music from a natural love of the art, attended all the best concerts her neighbourhood afforded, and regularly received from London the works of the best masters. But the little skill she had thus gained, served rather to increase than to lessen the surprise with which she heard the present performance—a surprise of which the discovery of her own ignorance made not the least part. Unconscious, from the little she had acquired, how much was to be learnt, she was astonished to find the inadequate power of written music to convey any idea of vocal abilities: with just knowledge enough, therefore, to understand something of the difficulties, and feel much of the merit, she gave to the whole opera an avidity of attention almost painful from its own eagerness.

But both the surprise and the pleasure which she received from the performance in general, were faint, cold, and languid, compared to the strength of those emotions

when excited by Signor Pacchierotti[1] in particular; and though not half the excellencies of that superior singer were necessary either to amaze or charm her unaccustomed ears, though the refinement of his taste and masterly originality of his genius, to be praised as they deserved, called for the judgment and knowledge of professors, yet a natural love of music in some measure supplied the place of cultivation, and what she could neither explain nor understand, she could feel and enjoy.

The opera was Artaserse;[2] and the pleasure she received from the music was much augmented by her previous acquaintance with that interesting drama; yet, as to all noviciates in science, whatever is least complicated is most pleasing, she found herself by nothing so deeply impressed, as by the plaintive and beautiful simplicity with which Pacchierotti uttered the affecting repetition of *sono innocente!* his voice, always either sweet or impassioned, deli-

[1] Gaspare Pacchierotti, who was born at Ancona in 1744, was the chief singer at the theatre of San Carlo, in Naples, in 1772, and of the Italian Opera House in London, from 1778 to 1785, and again in 1790. Pacchierotti was a friend of Dr. Burney and his family, and had lessons in English from Frances Burney as well as from the poet Mason. "January, 1779. . . . I like him of all things: he is perfectly modest, humble, well-bred, and unassuming. . . . . I am more pleased with Pacchierotti than ever; he seems to be perfectly amiable, gentle and good; his countenance is extremely benevolent, and his manners infinitely interesting."—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay* p. 15, vol. ii.

[2] The words of the opera of "Artaserse" were by Metastasio, the music by Vinci. It was first represented in Rome, during the Carnival of 1730. It contains the charming little poem,

"L'Onda dal mar divisa,"

Which was thus turned into English:—

"Water parted, water parted,
Water parted from the sea."

"Water parted" was one of the airs to which the bear of Tony Lumpkin's alehouse friend danced.

"*4th Fellow.*—The genteel thing is the genteel thing at any time; if so be that a gentleman bees in a concatenation accordingly.

"*3rd Fellow.*—I like the maxum of it, Master Muggins. What thof I am obligated to dance a bear, a man may be a gentleman for all that. May this be my poison, if my bear ever dances but to the very genteelest of tunes: 'Water parted,' or the minuet in 'Ariadne.'"—*She Stoops to Conquer.*

vered those words in a tone of softness, pathos, and sensibility, that struck her with a sensation not more new than delightful.

But though she was, perhaps, the only person thus astonished, she was by no means the only one enraptured; for notwithstanding she was too earnestly engaged to remark the company in general, she could not avoid taking notice of an old gentleman who stood by one of the side scenes, against which he leant his head in a manner that concealed his face, with an evident design to be wholly absorbed in listening: and during the songs of Pacchierotti he sighed so deeply, that Cecilia, struck by his uncommon sensibility to the power of music, involuntarily watched him, whenever her mind was sufficiently at liberty to attend to any emotions but its own.

As soon as the rehearsal was over, the gentlemen of Mrs. Harrel's party crowded before her box; and Cecilia then perceived that the person whose musical enthusiasm had excited her curiosity, was the same old gentleman whose extraordinary behaviour had so much surprised her at the house of Mr. Monckton. Her desire to obtain some information concerning him again reviving, she was beginning to make fresh enquiries, when she was interrupted by the approach of Captain Aresby.

That gentleman, advancing to her with a smile of the extremest self-complacency, after hoping, in a low voice, he had the honour of seeing her well, exclaimed, "How wretchedly empty is the town! petrifying to a degree! I believe you do not find yourself at present *obsedé* by too much company?"

"*At present*, I believe the contrary!" cried Mr. Gosport.

"Really!" said the Captain, unsuspicious of his sneer, "I protest I have hardly seen a soul. Have you tried the Pantheon[1] yet, ma'am?"

[1] A theatre and public promenade, opened in 1772, "undoubtedly the finest and most complete thing ever seen in England. Such mixture of company never assembled before under the same roof. Lord Mansfield, Mrs. Baddeley, Lord Chief Baron Parker, Mrs. Abington, Sir James Porter, Mademoiselle Heinell, Lords Hyde and Camden, with many other serious men, and many of the *gay* ladies in town, and ladies of the best rank and character; and, by appearance, some very low people. . . . . ."—Mrs. Harris, in the *Letters of the first Earl of Malmesbury*.

"No, sir."

"Nor I; I don't know whether people go there this year. It is not a favourite *spectacle* with me; that sitting to hear the music is a horrid bore. Have you done the Festino[1] the honour to look in there yet?"

"No, sir."

"Permit me, then, to have the honour to beg you will try it."

"O, ay, true," cried Mrs. Harrel; "I have really used you very ill about that; I should have got you in for a subscriber: but Lord, I have done nothing for you yet, and you never put me in mind. There's the ancient music,[2] and Abel's concert;[3]—as to the Opera, we may have a box between us;—but there's the ladies' concert we must try for; and there's—O Lord, fifty other places we must think of!"

"Oh, times of folly and dissipation!" exclaimed a voice at some distance; "oh, minions of idleness and luxury! What next will ye invent for the perdition of your time? How yet further will ye proceed in the annihilation of virtue?"

Every body stared; but Mrs. Harrel coolly said, "Dear, it's only the man-hater!"

"The man-hater?" repeated Cecilia, who found that the speech was made by the object of her former curiosity; "is that the name by which he is known?"

"He is known by fifty names," said Mr. Monckton;

[1] "There is a new dance at the Festino, called the '*Fricasée*.' It is danced by George Hanger, Mr. Damer, Lady Barrimore, and your friend Mrs. Rachel Lloyd. It begins with an affront, then they fight and fire pistols, then they are reconciled, embrace, and so ends the dance."—Mrs. Harris, in the *Malmesbury Letters*.

[2] The concerts of Ancient Music, generally known as "the King's Concerts," were begun in 1776 at Tottenham Street Rooms. Afterwards they were given at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. No composition less than twenty-five years old could be performed at these concerts.

[3] Abel's Concerts were held in the Hanover Square Rooms, which were built in 1774 by Sir John Gallini, one of the managers of the Italian Opera in London. King George and Queen Charlotte often went to them. Charles Frederick Abel, who came to London about 1761, and died there in 1787, was a composer, as well as performer of music, and "Chamber Musician" to the Queen.

"his friends call him the *moralist;* the young ladies, the *crazy-man;* the macaronies, the *bore;* in short, he is called by any and every name but his own."

"He is a most petrifying wretch, I assure you," said the Captain; "I am *obsedé* by him *partout;* if I had known he had been so near, I should certainly have said nothing."

"That you have done so well," cried Mr. Gosport, "that if you had known it the whole time, you could have done it no better."

The Captain, who had not heard this speech, which was rather made at him than to him, continued his address to Cecilia; "Give me leave to have the honour of hoping you intend to honour our select masquerade at the Pantheon with your presence. We shall have but 500 tickets, and the subscription will only be three guineas and a half."

"Oh, objects of penury and want!" again exclaimed the incognito; "oh vassals of famine and distress! Come and listen to this wantonness of wealth! Come, naked and breadless as ye are, and learn how that money is consumed which to you might bring raiment and food!"

"That strange wretch," said the Captain, "ought really to be confined; I have had the honour to be *degouté* by him so often, that I think him quite obnoxious. I make it a principle to seal up my lips the moment I perceive him."

"Where is it, then," said Cecilia, "that you have so often met him?"

"O," answered the Captain, "*partout;* there is no greater bore about town. But the time I found him most petrifying was once when I happened to have the honour of dancing with a very young lady, who was but just come from a boarding-school, and whose friends had done me the honour to fix upon me, upon the principle of first bringing her out: and while I was doing *mon possible* for killing the time, he came up, and, in his particular manner, told her I had no meaning in any thing I said! I must own I never felt more tempted to be *enragé* with a person in years, in my life."

Mr. Arnott now brought the ladies word that their carriage was ready, and they quitted their box: but as Cecilia had never before seen the interior parts of a theatre, Mr. Monckton, hoping while they loitered to have an opportunity of talking with her, asked Morrice why he did not

show the lions? Morrice, always happy in being employed, declared it was *just the thing he liked best*, and begged permission to do the honours to Mrs. Harrel, who, ever eager in the search of amusement, willingly accepted his offer.

They all, therefore, marched upon the stage, their own party now being the only one that remained.

"We shall make a triumphal entry here," cried Sir Robert Floyer; "the very tread of the stage half tempts me to turn actor."

"You are a rare man," said Mr. Gosport, "if, at your time of life, that is a turn not already taken."

"My time of life!" repeated he; "what do you mean by that? do you take me for an old man?"

"No, sir, but I take you to be past childhood, and consequently to have served your apprenticeship to the actors you have mixed with on the great stage of the world, and, for some years at least, to have set up for yourself."

"Come," cried Morrice, "let's have a little spouting; 'twill make us warm."

"Yes," said Sir Robert, "if we spout to an animating object. If Miss Beverley will be Juliet, I am Romeo at her service."

At this moment the incognito, quitting the corner in which he had planted himself, came suddenly forward, and standing before the whole group, cast upon Cecilia a look of much compassion, and called out, "Poor simple victim! hast thou already so many pursuers? yet seest not that thou art marked for sacrifice! yet knowest not that thou art destined for prey!"

Cecilia, extremely struck by this extraordinary address, stopt short, and looked much disturbed; which, when he perceived, he added, "Let the danger, not the warning affect you! discard the sycophants that surround you, seek the virtuous, relieve the poor, and save yourself from the impending destruction of unfeeling prosperity!"

Having uttered these words with vehemence and authority, he sternly passed them, and disappeared.

Cecilia, too much astonished for speech, stood for some time immoveable, revolving in her mind various conjectures upon the meaning of an exhortation so strange and so urgent.

Nor was the rest of the company much less discomposed: Sir Robert, Mr. Monckton, and Mr. Arnott, each conscious of their own particular plans, were each apprehensive that the warning pointed at himself: Mr. Gosport was offended at being included in the general appellation of sycophants; Mrs. Harrel was provoked at being interrupted in her ramble; and Captain Aresby, sickening at the very sight of him, retreated the moment he came forth.

"For heaven's sake," cried Cecilia, when somewhat recovered from her consternation, "who can this be, and what can he mean? You, Mr. Monckton, must surely know something of him; it was at your house I first saw him."

"Indeed," answered Mr. Monckton, "I knew almost nothing of him then, and I am but little better informed now. Belfield picked him up somewhere, and desired to bring him to my house: he called him by the name of Albany: I found him a most extraordinary character; and Belfield, who is a worshipper of originality, was very fond of him."

"He's a devilish crabbed old fellow," cried Sir Robert; "and if he goes on much longer at this confounded rate, he stands a very fair chance of getting his ears cropt."

"He is a man of the most singular conduct I have ever met with," said Mr. Gosport; "he seems to hold mankind in abhorrence, yet he is never a moment alone, and at the same time that he intrudes himself into all parties, he associates with none: he is commonly a stern and silent observer of all that passes, or when he speaks, it is but to utter some sentence of rigid morality, or some bitterness of indignant reproof."[1]

The carriage was now again announced, and Mr. Monckton taking Cecilia's hand, while Mr. Morrice secured to himself the honour of Mrs. Harrel's, Sir Robert and Mr. Gosport made their bows and departed. But though they had now quitted the stage, and arrived at the head of a small stair-case by which they were to descend out of the theatre, Mr. Monkton, finding all his tormentors retired,

[1] "My father's present favourite is the old crazy moralist, Albany. He is quite delighted with him; and no one else has taken any notice of him."—Miss Burney *to* Mr. Crisp, *May*, 1782 (*Diary*, p. 142, ii.).

except Mr. Arnott, whom he hoped to elude, could not resist making one more attempt for a few moments conversation with Cecilia; and, therefore, again applying to Morrice, he called out, "I don't think you have shown the ladies any of the contrivances behind the scenes."

"True," cried Morrice, "no more I have; suppose we go back?"

"I shall like it vastly," said Mrs. Harrel; and back they returned.

Mr. Monckton now soon found an opportunity to say to Cecilia, "Miss Beverley, what I foresaw has exactly come to pass; you are surrounded by selfish designers, by interested, double-minded people, who have nothing at heart but your fortune, and whose mercenary views, if you are not guarded against them——"

Here a loud scream from Mrs. Harrel interrupted his speech; Cecilia, much alarmed, turned from him to enquire the cause, and Mr. Monckton was obliged to follow her example; but his mortification was almost intolerable when he saw that lady in a violent fit of laughter, and found her scream was only occasioned by seeing Mr. Morrice, in his diligence to do the honours, pull upon his own head one of the side scenes!

There was now no possibility of proposing any farther delay; but Mr. Monckton, in attending the ladies to their carriage, was obliged to have recourse to his utmost discretion and forbearance, in order to check his desire of reprimanding Morrice for his blundering officiousness.

Dressing, dining with company at home, and then going out with company abroad, filled up, as usual, the rest of the day.

CHAPTER IX.

A SUPPLICATION.

THE next morning Cecilia, at the repeated remonstrances of Mrs. Harrel, consented to call upon Miss Larolles. She felt the impracticability of beginning at present the alteration in her way of life she had projected, and therefore thought it most expedient to assume no singularity, till her independency should enable her to support it with consistency; yet greater than ever was her internal cagerness to better satisfy her inclination and her conscience in the disposition of her time, and the distribution of her wealth, since she had heard the emphatic charge of her unknown mentor.

Mrs. Harrel declined accompanying her in this visit, because she had appointed a surveyor to bring a plan for the inspection of Mr. Harrel and herself, of a small temporary building, to be erected at Violet-Bank, for the purpose of performing plays in private the ensuing Easter.

When the street door was opened for her to get into the carriage, she was struck with the appearance of an elderly woman who was standing at some distance, and seemed shivering with cold, and who, as she descended the steps, joined her hands in an act of supplication, and advanced nearer to the carriage.

Cecilia stopt to look at her: her dress, though parsimonious, was too neat for a beggar; and she considered a moment what she could offer her. The poor woman continued to move forward, but with a slowness of pace that indicated extreme weakness; and, as she approached and raised her head, she exhibited a countenance so wretched, and a complexion so sickly, that Cecilia was impressed with horror at the sight.

With her hands still joined, and a voice that seemed fearful of its own sound, "Oh, madam," she cried, "that you would but hear me!"

"Hear you!" repeated Cecilia, hastily feeling for her

purse, "most certainly; and tell me how I shall assist you?"

"Heaven bless you for speaking so kindly, madam!" cried the woman, with a voice more assured; "I was sadly afraid you would be angry, but I saw the carriage at the door, and I thought I would try; for I could be no worse; and distress, madam, makes very bold."

"Angry!" said Cecilia, taking a crown from her purse; "no, indeed!—who could see such wretchedness, and feel anything but pity!"

"Oh, madam," returned the poor woman, "I could almost cry to hear you talk so, though I never thought to cry again, since I left it off for my poor Billy!"

"Have you, then, lost a son?"

"Yes, madam; but he was a great deal too good to live, so I have quite left off grieving for him now."

"Come in, good woman," said Cecilia; "it is too cold to stand here, and you seem half starved already: come in, and let me have some talk with you."

She then gave orders that the carriage should be driven round the square till she was ready, and making the woman follow her into a parlour, desired to know what she should do for her, changing, while she spoke, from a movement of encreasing compassion, the crown which she held in her hand for double that sum.

"You can do everything, madam," she answered, "if you will but plead for us to his honour: he little thinks of our distress, because he has been afflicted with none himself; and I would not be so troublesome to him, but indeed, indeed, madam, we are quite pinched for want!"

Cecilia, struck with the words *he little thinks of our distress, because he has been afflicted with none himself*, felt again ashamed of the smallness of her intended donation, and taking from her purse another half guinea, said, "Will this assist you? Will a guinea be sufficient for the present?"

"I humbly thank you, madam," said the woman, curtsying low; "shall I give you a receipt?"

"A receipt!" cried Cecilia, with emotion, "for what? Alas, our accounts are by no means balanced! but I shall do more for you, if I find you as deserving an object as you seem to be."

"You are very good, madam; but I only meant a receipt in part of payment."

"Payment for what? I don't understand you."

"Did his honour never tell you, madam, of our account?"

"What account?"

"Our bill, madam, for work done to the new Temple at Violet-Bank: it was the last great work my poor husband was able to do, for it was there he met with his misfortune."

"What bill? What misfortune?" cried Cecilia; "What had your husband to do at Violet-Bank?"

"He was the carpenter, madam. I thought you might have seen poor Hill the carpenter there."

"No, I never was there myself. Perhaps you mistake me for Mrs. Harrel."

"Why sure, madam, a'n't you his honour's lady?"

"No. But tell me, what is this bill?"

"'Tis a bill, madam, for very hard work, for work, madam, which I am sure will cost my husband his life; and though I have been after his honour night and day to get it, and sent him letters and petitions with an account of our misfortunes, I have never received so much as a shilling! and now the servants won't even let me wait in the hall to speak to him! Oh, madam! you who seem so good, plead to his honour in our behalf! tell him my poor husband cannot live! tell him my children are starving! and tell him my poor Billy, that used to help to keep us, is dead, and that all the work I can do by myself is not enough to maintain us!"

"Good heaven!" cried Cecilia, extremely moved, "is it then your own money for which you sue thus humbly?"

"Yes, madam, for my own just and honest money, as his honour knows, and will tell you himself."

"Impossible!" cried Cecilia, "he cannot know it; but I will take care he shall soon be informed of it. How much is the bill?"

"Two-and-twenty pounds, madam."

"What, no more?"

"Ah, madam, you gentlefolks little think how much that is to poor people! A hard-working family, like mine,

madam, with the help of £20 will go on for a long while quite in paradise."

"Poor worthy woman!" cried Cecilia, whose eyes were filled with tears of compassion, "if £20 will place you in paradise, and that £20 only your just right, it is hard, indeed, that you should be kept without it; especially when your debtors are too affluent to miss it. Stay here a few moments, and I will bring you the money immediately."

Away she flew, and returned to the breakfast room, but found there only Mr. Arnott, who told her that Mr. Harrel was in the library, with his sister and some gentlemen. Cecilia briefly related her business, and begged he would inform Mr. Harrel she wished to speak to him directly. Mr. Arnott shook his head, but obeyed.

They returned together, and immediately, "Miss Beverley," cried Mr. Harrel, gaily, "I am glad you are not gone, for we want much to consult with you. Will you come up stairs?"

"Presently," answered she; "but first I must speak to you about a poor woman with whom I have accidentally been talking, who has begged me to intercede with you to pay a little debt that she thinks you have forgotten, but that probably you have never heard mentioned."

"A debt!" cried he, with an immediate change of countenance, "to whom?"

"Her name, I think, is Hill; she is wife to the carpenter you employed about a new temple at Violet-Bank."

"O what—what that woman?—Well, well, I'll see she shall be paid. Come, let us go to the library."

"What, with my commission so ill executed? I promised to petition for her to have the money directly."

"Pho, pho, there's no such hurry; I don't know what I have done with her bill."

"I'll run and get another."

"O upon no account! She may send another in two or three days. She deserves to wait a twelvemonth for her impertinence in troubling you at all about it."

"That was entirely accidental: but indeed you must give me leave to perform my promise and plead for her. It must be almost the same to you whether you pay such a

trifle as £20 now, or a month hence, and to this poor woman, the difference seems little short of life or death; for she tells me her husband is dying, and her children half famished, and though she looks an object of the cruellest want and distress herself, she appears to be their only support."

"O," cried Mr. Harrel, laughing, "what a dismal tale has she been telling you! no doubt she saw you were fresh from the country! But if you give credit to all the farragos of these trumpery impostors, you will never have a moment to yourself, nor a guinea in your purse."

"This woman," answered Cecilia, "cannot be an impostor, she carries marks but too evident and too dreadful in her countenance of the sufferings which she relates."

"O," returned he, "when you know the town better, you will soon see through tricks of this sort; a sick husband and five small children are complaints so stale now, that they serve no other purpose in the world but to make a joke."

"Those, however, who can laugh at them, must have notions of merriment very different to mine. And this poor woman, whose cause I have ventured to undertake, had she no family at all, must still and indisputably be an object of pity herself, for she is so weak she can hardly crawl, and so pallid, that she seems already half dead."

"All imposition, depend upon it! The moment she is out of your sight, her complaints will vanish."

"Nay, sir," cried Cecilia, a little impatiently, "there is no reason to suspect such deceit, since she does not come hither as a beggar, however well the state of beggary may accord with her poverty: she only solicits the payment of a bill; and if in that there is any fraud, nothing can be so easy as detection."

Mr. Harrel bit his lips at this speech, and for some instants looked much disturbed; but soon recovering himself, he negligently said, "Pray how did she get at you?"

"I met her at the street door. But tell me, is not her bill a just one?"

"I cannot say; I have never had time to look at it."

"But you know who the woman is, and that her husband

worked for you, and therefore that in all probability it is right,—do you not?"

"Yes, yes, I know who the woman is well enough; she has taken care of that, for she has pestered me every day these nine months."

Cecilia was struck dumb by this speech: hitherto she had supposed that the dissipation of his life kept him ignorant of his own injustice; but when she found he was so well informed of it, yet, with such total indifference, could suffer a poor woman to claim a just debt every day for nine months together, she was shocked and astonished beyond measure. They were both some time silent, and then Mr. Harrel, yawning and stretching out his arms, indolently asked, "Pray why does not the man come himself?"

"Did I not tell you," answered Cecilia, staring at so absent a question, "that he was very ill, and unable even to work?"

"Well, when he is better," added he, moving towards the door, "he may call, and I will talk to him."

Cecilia, all amazement at this unfeeling behaviour, turned involuntarily to Mr. Arnott, with a countenance that appealed for his assistance; but Mr. Arnott hung his head, ashamed to meet her eyes, and abruptly left the room.

Mean time Mr. Harrel, half turning back, though without looking Cecilia in the face, carelessly said, "Well, won't you come?"

"No, sir," answered she, coldly.

He then returned to the library, leaving her equally displeased, surprised and disconcerted at the conversation which had just passed between them. "Good heaven," cried she to herself, "what strange, what cruel insensibility! to suffer a wretched family to starve, from an obstinate determination to assert that they can live! to distress the poor by retaining the recompence for which alone they labour, and which at last they must have, merely from indolence, forgetfulness, or insolence! O how little did my uncle know, how little did I imagine to what a guardian I was entrusted!" She now felt ashamed even to return to the poor woman, though she resolved to do all

in her power to soften her disappointment, and relieve her distress.

But before she had quitted the room, one of the servants came to tell her that his master begged the honour of her company up stairs. "Perhaps he relents!" thought she; and pleased with the hope, readily obeyed the summons.

She found him, his lady, Sir Robert Floyer, and two other gentlemen, all earnestly engaged in an argument over a large table, which was covered with plans and elevations of small buildings.

Mr. Harrel immediately addressed her with an air of vivacity, and said "You are very good for coming; we can settle nothing without your advice; pray look at these different plans for our theatre, and tell us which is the best."

Cecilia advanced not a step: the sight of plans for new edifices when the workmen were yet unpaid for old ones, the cruel wantonness of raising fresh fabrics of expensive luxury, while those so lately built had brought their neglected labourers to ruin, excited an indignation she scarce thought right to repress: while the easy sprightliness of the director of these revels, to whom but the moment before she had represented the oppression of which they made him guilty, filled her with aversion and disgust: and, recollecting the charge given her by the stranger at the Opera rehearsal, she resolved to speed her departure to another house, internally repeating, "Yes, I *will* save myself from *the impending destruction of unfeeling prosperity!*"

Mrs. Harrel, surprised at her silence and extreme gravity, enquired if she was not well, and why she had put off her visit to Miss Larolles? And Sir Robert Floyer, turning suddenly to look at her, said, "Do you begin to feel the London air already?"

Cecilia endeavoured to recover her serenity, and answer these questions in her usual manner; but she persisted in declining to give any opinion at all about the plans, and, after slightly looking at them, left the room.

Mr. Harrel, who knew better how to account for her behaviour than he thought proper to declare, saw with concern that she was more seriously displeased, than he had believed an occurrence which he had regarded as

wholly unimportant, could have made her: and therefore, desirous that she should be appeased, he followed her out of the library, and said "Miss Beverley, will to-morrow be soon enough for your *protégée?*"

"O yes, no doubt!" answered she, most agreeably surprised by the question.

"Well, then, will you take the trouble to bid her come to me in the morning?"

Delighted at this unexpected commission, she thanked him with smiles for the office; and as she hastened down stairs to cheer the poor expectant with the welcome intelligence, she framed a thousand excuses for the part he had hitherto acted, and without any difficulty, persuaded herself he began to see the faults of his conduct, and to meditate a reformation.

She was received by the poor creature she so warmly wished to serve with a countenance already so much enlivened, that she fancied Mr. Harrel had himself anticipated her intended information: this, however, she found was not the case, for as soon as she heard his message, she shook her head and said, "Ah, madam, his honour always says to-morrow! but I can better bear to be disappointed now, so I'll grumble no more; for indeed, madam, I have been blest enough to-day to comfort me for every thing in the world, if I could but keep from thinking of poor Billy! I could bear all the rest, madam, but whenever my other troubles go off, that comes back to me so much the harder!"

"There, indeed, I can afford you no relief," said Cecilia, "but you must try to think less of him, and more of your husband and children who are now alive. To-morrow you will receive your money, and that, I hope, will raise your spirits. And pray let your husband have a physician, to tell you how to nurse and manage him: I will give you one fee for him now, and if he should want further advice, don't fear to let me know."

Cecilia had again taken out her purse, but Mrs. Hill, clasping her hands, called out "Oh, madam, no! I don't come here to fleece such goodness! but blessed be the hour that brought me here to-day, and if my poor Billy was alive, he should help me to thank you!"

She then told her that she was now quite rich, for while she was gone, a gentleman had come into the room, who had given her five guineas.

Cecilia, by her description, soon found this gentleman was Mr. Arnott, and a charity so sympathetic with her own, failed not to raise him greatly in her favour. But as her benevolence was a stranger to that parade which is only liberal from emulation, when she found more money not immediately wanted, she put up her purse, and charging Mrs. Hill to enquire for her the next morning when she came to be paid, bid her hasten back to her sick husband.

And then, again ordering the carriage to the door, she set off upon her visit to Miss Larolles, with a heart happy in the good already done, and happier still in the hope of doing more.

Miss Larolles was out, and she returned home; for she was too sanguine in her expectations from Mr. Harrel, to have any desire of seeking her other guardians. The rest of the day she was more than usually civil to him, with a view to mark her approbation of his good intentions; while Mr. Arnott, gratified by meeting the smiles he so much valued, thought his five guineas amply repaid, independently of the real pleasure which he took in doing good.

CHAPTER X.

A PROVOCATION.

THE next morning, when breakfast was over, Cecilia waited with much impatience to hear some tidings of the poor carpenter's wife; but though Mr. Harrel, who had always that meal in his own room, came into his lady's at his usual hour, to see what was going forward, he did not mention her name. She therefore went into the hall herself, to enquire among the servants if Mrs. Hill was yet come?

Yes, they answered, and had seen their master, and was gone.

She then returned to the breakfast room, where her eagerness to procure some information detained her, though the entrance of Sir Robert Floyer made her wish to retire. But she was wholly at a loss whether to impute to general forgetfulness, or to the failure of performing his promise, the silence of Mr. Harrel upon the subject of her petition.

In a few minutes they were visited by Mr. Morrice, who said he called to acquaint the ladies that the next morning there was to be a rehearsal of a very grand new dance at the Opera-House, where, though admission was difficult, if it was agreeable to them to go, he would undertake to introduce them.

Mrs. Harrel happened to be engaged, and therefore declined the offer. He then turned to Cecilia, and said, "Well, ma'am, when did you see our friend Monckton?"

"Not since the rehearsal, sir."

"He is a mighty agreeable fellow," he continued, "and his house in the country is charming. One is as easy at it as at home. Were you ever there, Sir Robert?"

"Not I, truly," replied Sir Robert; "what should I go for?—to see an old woman with never a tooth in her head sitting at the top of the table! Faith I'd go a hundred miles a day for a month never to see such a sight again."

"O, but you don't know how well she does the honours," said Morrice; "and for my part, except just at meal times, I always contrive to keep out of her way."

"I wonder when she intends to die," said Mr. Harrel.

"She's been a long time about it," cried Sir Robert; "but those tough old cats last for ever. We all thought she was going when Monckton married her; however, if he had not managed like a driveller, he might have broke her heart nine years ago."

"I am sure I wish he had," cried Mrs. Harrel, "for she's an odious creature, and used always to make me afraid of her."

"But an old woman," answered Sir Robert, "is a person who has no sense of decency; if once she takes to living, the devil himself can't get rid of her."

"I dare say," cried Morrice, "She'll pop off before long in one of those fits of the asthma. I assure you sometimes you may hear her wheeze a mile off."

"She'll go never the sooner for that," said Sir Robert, "for I have got an old aunt of my own, who has been puffing and blowing as if she was at her last gasp ever since I can remember; and for all that, only yesterday, when I asked her doctor when she'd give up the ghost, he told me she might live these dozen years."

Cecilia was by no means sorry to have this brutal conversation interrupted by the entrance of a servant with a letter for her. She was immediately retiring to read it; but upon the petition of Mr. Monckton, who just them came into the room, she only went to a window. The letter was as follows:

To
Miss,
at his Honour Squire Harrel's,
These.

Honoured Madam,

THIS with my humble duty. His Honour has given me nothing. But I would not be troublesome, having wherewithal to wait, so conclude,

Honoured Madam,
Your dutiful servant to command,
till death,
M. Hill.

The vexation with which Cecilia read this letter was visible to the whole company; and while Mr. Arnott looked at her with a wish of enquiry he did not dare express, and Mr. Monckton, under an appearance of inattention, concealed the most anxious curiosity; Mr. Morrice alone had courage to interrogate her, and, pertly advancing, said, "He is a happy man who writ that letter, ma'am, for I am sure you have not read it with indifference."

"Were I the writer," said Mr. Arnott, tenderly, "I am sure I should reckon myself far otherwise, for Miss Beverley seems to have read it with uneasiness."

"However I have read it," answered she, "I assure you it is not from *any man*."

"O pray, Miss Beverley," cried Sir Robert, coming forward, "are you any better to-day?"

"No, Sir, for I have not been ill."

"A little vapoured, I thought, yesterday; perhaps you want exercise."

"I wish the ladies would put themselves under my care," cried Morrice, "and take a turn round the park."

"I don't doubt you, sir," said Mr. Monckton, contemptuously, "and, but for the check of modesty, probably there is not a man here who would not wish the same."

"I could propose a much better scheme than that," said Sir Robert; "what if you all walk to Harley-street, and give me your notions of a house I am about there? what say you, Mrs. Harrel?"

"O, I shall like it vastly."

"Done," cried Mr. Harrel; "'tis an excellent notion."

"Come then," said Sir Robert, "let's be off. Miss Beverley, I hope you have a good warm cloak?"

"I must beg you to excuse my attending you, sir."

Mr. Monckton, who had heard this proposal with the utmost dread of its success, revived at the calm steadiness with which it was declined. Mr. and Mrs. Harrel both teased Cecilia to consent; but the haughty Baronet, evidently more offended than hurt by her refusal, pressed the matter no further, either with her or the rest of the party, and the scheme was dropt entirely.

Mr. Monckton failed not to remark this circumstance, which confirmed his suspicions, that though the proposal seemed made by chance, his design was nothing else than to obtain Cecilia's opinion concerning his house. But while this somewhat alarmed him, the unabated insolence of his carriage, and the confident defiance of his pride, still more surprised him; and notwithstanding all he observed of Cecilia, seemed to promise nothing but dislike, he could draw no other inference from his behaviour, than that if he admired, he also concluded himself sure of her.

This was not a pleasant conjecture, however little weight he allowed to it; and he resolved, by outstaying all the company, to have a few minutes private discourse with her upon the subject.

In about half an hour, Sir Robert and Mr. Harrel went out together: Mr. Monckton still persevered in keeping his ground, and tried, though already weary, to keep up a general conversation; but what moved at once his wonder

and his indignation was the assurance of Morrice, who seemed not only bent upon staying as long as himself, but determined, by rattling away, to make his own entertainment.

At length a servant came in to tell Mrs. Harrel that a stranger, who was waiting in the housekeeper's room, begged to speak with her upon very particular business.

"O, I know," cried she, "'tis that odious John Groot: do pray, brother, try to get rid of him for me, for he comes to tease me about his bill, and I never know what to say to him."

Mr. Arnott went immediately, and Mr. Monckton could scarce refrain from going too, that he might entreat John Groot by no means to be satisfied without seeing Mrs. Harrel herself: John Groot, however, wanted not his entreaties, as the servant soon returned to summon his lady to the conference.

But though Mr. Monckton now seemed near the completion of his purpose, Morrice still remained; his vexation at this circumstance soon grew intolerable; to see himself upon the point of receiving the recompence of his perseverance, by the fortunate removal of all the obstacles in its way, and then to have it held from him by a young fellow he so much despised, and who had no entrance into the house but through his own boldness, and no inducement to stay in it but from his own impertinence, mortified him so insufferably, that it was with difficulty he even forbore affronting him. Nor would he have scrupled a moment desiring him to leave the room, had he not prudently determined to guard with the utmost sedulity against raising any suspicions of his passion for Cecilia.

He arose, however, and was moving towards her, with intention to occupy a part of a sofa on which she was seated, when Morrice, who was standing at the back of it, with a sudden spring which made the whole room shake, jumpt over, and sunk plump into the vacant place himself, calling out at the same time, "Come, come, what have you married men to do with young ladies? I shall seize this post for myself."

The rage of Mr. Monckton at this feat, and still more at the words *married men*, almost exceeded endurance; he stopt

short, and looking at him with a fierceness that overpowered his discretion, was bursting out with, "Sir, you are an—*impudent fellow;*" but checking himself when he got half way, concluded with, "a very facetious gentleman!"

Morrice, who wished nothing so little as disobliging Mr. Monckton, and whose behaviour was merely the result of levity, and a want of early education, no sooner perceived his displeasure, than rising with yet more agility than he had seated himself, he resumed the obsequiousness of which an uncommon flow of spirits had robbed him, and guessing no other subject for his anger than the disturbance he had made, he bowed almost to the ground, first to him, and afterwards to Cecilia, most respectfully begging pardon of them both for his frolic, and protesting he had no notion he should have made such a noise!

Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott now hastening back, enquired what had been the matter? Morrice, ashamed of his exploit, and frightened by the looks of Mr. Monckton, made an apology with the utmost humility, and hurried away: and Mr. Monckton, hopeless of any better fortune, soon did the same, gnawn with a cruel discontent which he did not dare avow, and longing to revenge himself upon Morrice, even by personal chastisement.

CHAPTER XI.

A NARRATION.

THE moment Cecilia was at liberty, she sent her own servant to examine into the real situation of the carpenter and his family, and to desire his wife would call upon her as soon as she was at leisure. The account which he brought back encreased her concern for the injuries of these poor people, and determined her not to rest satisfied till she saw them redressed. He informed her that they lived in a small lodging up two pair of stairs; that there were five children, all girls, the three eldest of whom were hard at work with their mother in matting chair-bottoms,

and the fourth, though a mere child, was nursing the youngest; while the poor carpenter himself was confined to his bed, in consequence of a fall from a ladder while working at Violet-Bank, by which he was covered with wounds and contusions, and an object of misery and pain.

As soon as Mrs. Hill came, Cecilia sent for her into her own room, where she received her with the most compassionate tenderness, and desired to know when Mr. Harrel talked of paying her.

"To-morrow, madam," she answered, shaking her head, "that is always his honour's speech: but I shall bear it while I can. However, though I dare not tell his honour, something bad will come of it, if I am not paid soon."

"Do you mean, then, to apply to the law?"

"I must not tell you, madam; but to be sure we have thought of it many a sad time and often; but still, while we could rub on, we thought it best not to make enemies: but, indeed, madam, his honour was so hardhearted this morning, that if I was not afraid you would be angry, I could not tell how to bear it; for when I told him I had no help now, for I had lost my Billy, he had the heart to say, so much the better, there's one the less of you."

"But what," cried Cecilia, extremely shocked by this unfeeling speech, "is the reason he gives for disappointing you so often?"

"He says, madam, that none of the other workmen are paid yet; and that, to be sure, is very true; but then they can all better afford to wait than we can, for we were the poorest of all, madam, and have been misfortunate from the beginning: and his honour would never have employed us, only he had run up such a bill with Mr. Wright, that he would not undertake any thing more till he was paid. We were told from the first we should not get our money; but we were willing to hope for the best, for we had nothing to do, and were hard run, and had never had the offer of so good a job before; and we had a great family to keep, and many losses, and so much illness!—Oh, madam! if you did but know what the poor go through!"

This speech opened to Cecilia a new view of life; that a young man could appear so gay and happy, yet be guilty of such injustice and inhumanity; that he could take

pride in works which not even money had made his own, and live with undiminished splendour, when his credit itself began to fail, seemed to her incongruities so irrational, that hitherto she had supposed them impossible.

She then enquired if her husband had yet had any physician?

"Yes, madam, I humbly thank your goodness," she answered; "but I am not the poorer for that, for the gentleman was so kind he would take nothing."

"And does he give you any hopes? what does he say?"

"He says he must die, madam! but I knew that before."

"Poor woman! and what will you do then?"

"The same, madam, as I did when I lost my Billy, work on the harder!"

"Good heaven, how severe a lot! but tell me, why is it you seem to love your Billy so much better than the rest of your children!"

"Because, madam, he was the only boy that ever I had; he was seventeen years old, madam, and as tall and as pretty a lad! and so good, that he never cost me a wet eye till I lost him. He worked with his father, and all the folks used to say he was the better workman of the two."

"And what was the occasion of his death?"

"A consumption, madam, that wasted him quite to nothing: and he was ill a long time, and cost us a deal of money, for we spared neither for wine nor any thing, that we thought would but comfort him; and we loved him so we never grudged it. But he died, madam! and if it had not been for very hard work, the loss of him would quite have broke my heart."[1]

[1] "Madame D'Arblay was most successful in comedy, and indeed in comedy which bordered on farce. But we are inclined to infer from some passages, both in Cecilia and Camilla, that she might have attained equal distinction in the pathetic. . . . . We would mention as examples, Mrs. Hill's account of her little boy's * death in Cecilia, and the parting of Sir Hugh Tyrold and Camilla, when the honest baronet thinks himself dying."—MACAULAY.

Madame de la Fite "could only talk of her dear Elise.† She compared

* This is an over-sight, Billy was seventeen.

† A daughter she had lost.

"Try, however, to think less of him," said Cecilia; "and depend upon my speaking again for you to Mr. Harrel. You shall certainly have your money; take care, therefore, of your own health, and go home and give comfort to your sick husband."

"Oh, madam," cried the poor woman, tears streaming down her cheeks, "you don't know how touching it is to hear gentlefolks talk so kindly! And I have been used to nothing but roughness from his honour! But what I most fear, madam, is that when my husband is gone, he will be harder to deal with than ever; for a widow, madam, is always hard to be righted; and I don't expect to hold out long myself, for sickness and sorrow wear fast: and then, when we are both gone, who is to help our poor children?"

"*I* will!" cried the generous Cecilia; "I am able, and I am willing; you shall not find all the rich hard-hearted, and I will try to make you some amends for the unkindness you have suffered."

The poor woman, overcome by a promise so unexpected, burst into a passionate fit of tears, and sobbed out her thanks with a violence of emotion that frightened Cecilia almost as much as it melted her. She endeavoured, by reiterated assurances of assistance, to appease her, and solemnly pledged her own honour that she should certainly be paid the following Saturday, which was only three days distant.

Mrs. Hill, when a little calmer, dried her eyes, and humbly begging her to forgive a transport which she could not restrain, most gratefully thanked her for the engagement into which she had entered, protesting that she would not be *troublesome to her goodness* as long as she could help it: "And I believe," she continued, "that if his honour will but pay me time enough for the burial, I can make shift with what I have till then. But when my poor Billy died, we were sadly off indeed, for we could not bear but bury

herself with poor Mrs. Hill, who had lost her Billy, and could speak of nothing without recurring to him. She had just been reading 'Cecilia,' she told me, to the Princess Elizabeth; but when she came to that part, she could not go on for her tears." *Diary of Mdme. D'Arblay*, p. 362, vol. ii.

him prettily, because it was the last we could do for him: but we could hardly scrape up enough for it, and yet we all went without our dinners to help forward, except the little one of all. But that did not much matter, for we had no great heart for eating."

"I cannot bear this!" cried Cecilia; "you must tell me no more of your Billy; but go home and cheer your spirits, and do every thing in your power to save your husband."

"I will, madam," answered the woman, "and his dying prayers shall bless you, and all my children shall bless you, and every night they shall pray for you. And oh that Billy was but alive to pray for you too!"

Cecilia kindly endeavoured to soothe her, but the poor creature, no longer able to suppress the violence of her awakened sorrows, cried out, "I must go, madam, and pray for you at home, for now I have once begun crying again, I don't know how to have done!" and hurried away.

Cecilia determined to make once more an effort with Mr. Harrel for the payment of the bill, and if that, in two days, did not succeed, to take up money for the discharge of it herself, and rest all her security for reimbursement upon the shame with which such a proceeding must overwhelm him. Offended, however, by the repulse she had already received from him, and disgusted by all she had heard of his unfeeling negligence, she knew not how to address him, and resolved upon applying again to Mr. Arnott, who was already acquainted with the affair, for advice and assistance.

Mr. Arnott, though extremely gratified that she consulted him, betrayed by his looks an hopelessness of success that damped all her expectations. He promised, however, to speak to Mr. Harrel upon the subject, but the promise was evidently given to oblige the fair mediatrix, without any hope of advantage to the cause.

The next morning Mrs. Hill again came, and again without payment was dismissed.

Mr. Arnott then, at the request of Cecilia, followed Mr. Harrel into his room, to enquire into the reason of this breach of promise; they continued some time together,

and when he returned to Cecilia, he told her, that his brother had assured him he would give orders to Davison, his gentleman, to let her have the money the next day.

The pleasure with which she would have heard this intelligence was much checked by the grave and cold manner in which it was communicated: she waited, therefore, with more impatience than confidence for the result of this fresh assurance.

The next morning, however, was the same as the last; Mrs. Hill came, saw Davison, and was sent away.

Cecilia, to whom she related her grievances, then flew to Mr. Arnott, and entreated him to enquire at least of Davison why the woman had again been disappointed.

Mr. Arnott obeyed her, and brought for answer, that Davison had received no orders from his master.

"I entreat you then," cried she, with mingled eagerness and vexation, "to go, for the last time, to Mr. Harrel. I am sorry to impose upon you an office so disagreeable, but I am sure you compassionate these poor people, and will serve them now with your interest, as you have already done with your purse. I only wish to know if there has been any mistake, or if these delays are merely to sicken me of petitioning."

Mr. Arnott, with a repugnance to the request which he could as ill conceal as his admiration of the zealous requester, again forced himself to follow Mr. Harrel. His stay was not long, and Cecilia at his return perceived that he was hurt and disconcerted. As soon as they were alone together, she begged to know what had passed? "Nothing," answered he, "that will give you any pleasure. When I entreated my brother to come to the point, he said it was his intention to pay all his workmen together, for that if he paid any one singly, all the rest would be dissatisfied."

"And why," said Cecilia, "should he not pay them at once? There can be no more comparison in the value of the money to him and to them, than, to speak with truth, there is in his and in their right to it."

"But, madam, the bills for the new house itself are none of them settled, and he says that the moment he is known to discharge an account for the Temple, he shall

not have any rest for the clamours it will raise among the workmen who were employed about the house."

"How infinitely strange!" exclaimed Cecilia; "will he not, then, pay anybody?"

"Next quarter, he says, he shall pay them all, but, at present, he has a particular call for his money."

Cecilia would not trust herself to make any comments upon such an avowal, but, thanking Mr. Arnott for the trouble which he had taken, she determined, without any further application, to desire Mr. Harrel to advance her £20 the next morning, and satisfy the carpenter herself, be the risk what it might.

The following day, therefore, which was the Saturday when payment was promised, she begged an audience of Mr. Harrel; which he immediately granted; but, before she could make her demand, he said to her, with an air of the utmost gaiety and good-humour, "Well, Miss Beverley, how fares it with your *protegée?* I hope, at length, she is contented. But I must beg you would charge her to keep her own counsel, as otherwise she will draw me into a scrape I shall not thank her for."

"Have you then paid her?" cried Cecilia, with much amazement.

"Yes; I promised you I would, you know."

This intelligence equally delighted and astonished her; she repeatedly thanked him for his attention to her petition, and, eager to communicate her success to Mr. Arnott, she hastened to find him. "Now," cried she, "I shall torment you no more with painful commissions; the Hills, at last, are paid!"

"From you, madam," answered he gravely, "no commissions could be painful."

"Well but," said Cecilia, somewhat disappointed, "you don't seem glad of this?"

"Yes," answered he, with a forced smile, "I am very glad to see you so."

"But how was it brought about? did Mr. Harrel relent? or did you attack him again?"

The hesitation of his answer convinced her there was some mystery in the transaction; she began to apprehend she had been deceived, and hastily quitting the room, sent

for Mrs. Hill: but the moment the poor woman appeared, she was satisfied of the contrary, for, almost frantic with joy and gratitude, she immediately flung herself upon her knees, to thank her benefactress for having *seen her righted.*

Cecilia then gave her some general advice, promised to continue her friend, and offered her assistance in getting her husband into an hospital: but she told her he had already been in one many months, where he was pronounced incurable, and was therefore desirous to spend his last days in his own lodgings.

"Well," said Cecilia, "make them as easy to him as you can, and come to me next week, and I will try to put you in a better way of living."

She then, still greatly perplexed about Mr. Arnott, sought him again, and, after various questions and conjectures, at length brought him to confess he had himself lent his brother the sum with which the Hills had been paid.

Struck with his generosity, she poured forth thanks and praises so grateful to his ears, that she soon gave him a recompense which he would have thought cheaply purchased by half his fortune.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

A MAN OF WEALTH.

THE meanness with which Mr. Harrel had assumed the credit, as well as accepted the assistance of Mr. Arnott, encreased the disgust he had already excited in Cecilia, and hastened her resolution of quitting his house: and therefore, without waiting any longer for the advice of Mr. Monckton, she resolved to go instantly to her other guardians, and see what better prospects their habitations might offer.

For this purpose, she borrowed one of the carriages, and gave orders to be driven into the city, to the house of Mr. Briggs.

She told her name, and was shown, by a little shabby foot-boy, into a parlour.

Here she waited, with tolerable patience, for half an hour, but then, imagining the boy had forgotten to tell his master she was in the house, she thought it expedient to make some enquiry.

No bell, however, could she find, and therefore she went into the passage in search of the foot-boy; but as she was proceeding to the head of the kitchen stairs, she was startled by hearing a man's voice from the upper part of the house, exclaiming, in a furious passion, "Dare say you have filched it for a dish-clout!"

She called out, however, "Are any of Mr. Briggs's servants below?"

"Anan!" answered the boy, who came to the foot of the stairs with a knife in one hand, and an old shoe, upon the

sole of which he was sharpening it, in the other, "Does any one call?"

"Yes," said Cecilia, "I do; for I could not find the bell."

"O, we have no bell in the parlour," returned the boy, "master always knocks with his stick."

"I am afraid Mr. Briggs is too busy to see me, and if so, I will come another time."

"No, ma'am," said the boy, "master's only looking over his things from the wash."

"Will you tell him, then, that I am waiting?"

"I has, ma'am; but master misses his shaving-rag, and he says he won't come to the Mogul till he's found it." And then he went on with sharpening his knife.

This little circumstance was at least sufficient to satisfy Cecilia that if she fixed her abode with Mr. Briggs, she should not have much uneasiness to fear from the sight of extravagance and profusion.

She returned to the parlour, and after waiting another half hour, Mr. Briggs made his appearance.

Mr. Briggs was a short, thick, sturdy man, with very small keen black eyes, a square face, a dark complexion, and a snub nose. His constant dress, both in winter and summer, was a snuff-colour suit of clothes, blue and white speckled worsted stockings, a plain shirt, and a bob wig. He was seldom without a stick in his hand, which he usually held to his forehead when not speaking.

This bob wig, however, to the no small amazement of Cecilia, he now brought into the room upon the fore-finger of his left hand, while, with his right, he was smoothing the curls; and his head, in defiance of the coldness of the weather, was bald and uncovered.

"Well," cried he, as he entered, "did you think should not come?"

"I was very willing, sir, to wait your leisure."

"Ay, ay, knew you had not much to do. Been looking for my shaving-rag. Going out of town; never use such a thing at home, paper does as well. Warrant master Harrel never heard of such a thing; ever see him comb his own wig? Warrant he don't know how! never trust mine out of my hands, the boy would tear off half the hair; all

one to master Harrel, I suppose. Well, which is the warmer man, that's all? Will he cast an account with me?"

Cecilia, at a loss what to say to this singular exordium, began an apology for not waiting upon him sooner.

"Ay, ay," cried he, "always gadding, no getting sight of you. Live a fine life! A pretty guardian master Harrel! and where's t'other? where's old Don Puffabout?"

"If you mean Mr. Delvile, sir, I have not yet seen him."

"Thought so. No matter: as well not. Only tell you he's a German Duke, or a Spanish Don Ferdinand. Well you've me! poorly off else. A couple of ignoramusses! don't know when to buy nor when to sell. No doing business with either of them. We met once or twice; all to no purpose; only heard Don Vampus count his old Grandees; how will that get interest for money? Then comes master Harrel,—twenty bows to a word,—looks at a watch,—about as big as a sixpence,—poor raw ninny!—a couple of rare guardians! Well you've me, I say; mind that!"

Cecilia was wholly unable to devise any answer to these effusions of contempt and anger; and therefore his harangue lasted without interruption, till he had exhausted all his subjects of complaint, and emptied his mind of ill-will; and then, settling his wig, he drew a chair near her, and twinkling his little black eyes in her face, his rage subsided into the most perfect good-humour; and, after peering at her some time with a look of much approbation, he said, with an arch nod, "Well, my duck, got ever a sweet-heart yet?"

Cecilia laughed, and said "No."

"Ah, little rogue, don't believe you! all a fib! better speak out: come, fit I should know; a'n't you my own ward? to be sure almost of age, but not quite, so what's that to me?"

She then, more seriously, assured him she had no intelligence of that sort to communicate.

"Well, when you have, tell, that's all. Warrant sparks enough hankering. I'll give you some advice. Take care of sharpers; don't trust shoe-buckles, nothing but Bristol stones! tricks in all things. A fine gentleman sharp as

another man. Never give your heart to a gold-topped cane, nothing but brass gilt over. Cheats every where; fleece you in a year; won't leave you a groat. But one way to be safe,—bring 'em all to me."

Cecilia thanked him for his caution, and promised not to forget his advice.

"That's the way," he continued, "bring 'em to me. Won't be bamboozled. Know their tricks. Show 'em the odds on't. Ask for the rent-roll,—see how they'll look! stare like stuck pigs! got no such thing."

"Certainly, sir, that will be an excellent method of trial."

"Ay, ay, know the way! soon find if they are above par. Be sure don't mind gold waistcoats; nothing but tinsel, all show and no substance; better leave the matter to me; take care of you myself; know where to find one will do."

She again thanked him; and, being fully satisfied with this specimen of his conversation, and unambitious of any further counsel from him, she arose to depart.

"Well," repeated he, nodding at her with a look of much kindness, "leave it to me, I say; I'll get you a careful husband, so take no thought about the matter."

Cecilia, half laughing, begged he would not give himself much trouble, and assured him she was not in any haste.

"All the better," said he, "good girl; no fear for you: look out myself; warrant I'll find one. Not very easy, neither; hard times! men scarce! wars and tumults! stocks low! women chargeable!—but don't fear; do our best; get you off soon."

She then returned to her carriage; full of reflection upon the scene in which she had just been engaged, and upon the strangeness of hastening from one house to avoid a vice the very want of which seemed to render another insupportable! but she now found that though luxury was more baneful in its consequences, it was less disgustful in its progress than avarice; yet, insuperably averse to both, and almost equally desirous to fly from the unjust extravagance of Mr. Harrel, as from the comfortless and unnecessary parsimony of Mr. Briggs, she proceeded instantly to St. James's-square,[1] convinced that her third guardian, unless

[1] It is singular that Mr. Delvile, who is only a younger son, should be made to possess both the family castle, and a house in St. James's Square.

exactly resembling one of the others, must inevitably be preferable to both.

CHAPTER II.

A MAN OF FAMILY.

THE house of Mr. Delvile was grand and spacious, fitted up not with modern taste, but with the magnificence of former times; the servants were all veterans, gorgeous in their liveries, and profoundly respectful in their manners; every thing had an air of state, but of a state so gloomy, that while it inspired awe, it repressed pleasure.

Cecilia sent in her name, and was admitted without difficulty, and was then ushered with great pomp through sundry apartments, and rows of servants, before she came into the presence of Mr. Delvile.

He received her with an air of haughty affability, which, to a spirit open and liberal as that of Cecilia, could not fail being extremely offensive; but too much occupied with the care of his own importance to penetrate into the feelings of another, he attributed the uneasiness which his reception occasioned, to the over-awing predominance of superior rank and consequence.

He ordered a servant to bring her a chair, while he only half rose from his own upon her entering into the room; then, waving his hand and bowing, with a motion that desired her to be seated, he said, "I am very happy, Miss Beverley, that you have found me alone; you would rarely have had the same good fortune. At this time of day I am generally in a crowd. People of large connections have not much leisure in London, especially if they see a little after their own affairs, and if their estates, like mine, are dispersed in various parts of the kingdom. However, I am glad it happened so. And I am glad, too, that you have done me the favour of calling without waiting till I sent, which I really would have done as soon as I heard of your arrival, but that the multiplicity of my engagements allowed me no respite."

A display of importance so ostentatious made Cecilia already half repent her visit, satisfied that the hope in which she had planned it would be fruitless.

Mr. Delvile, still imputing to embarrassment, an inquietude of countenance that proceeded merely from disappointment, imagined her veneration was every moment encreasing; and therefore, pitying a timidity which both gratified and softened him, and equally pleased with himself for inspiring, and with her for feeling it, he abated more and more of his greatness, till he became, at length, so infinitely condescending, with intention to give her courage, that he totally depressed her with mortification and chagrin.

After some general enquiries concerning her way of life, he told her that he hoped she was contented with her situation at the Harrels, adding, "If you have any thing to complain of, remember to whom you may appeal." He then asked if she had seen Mr. Briggs?

"Yes, sir, I am this moment come from his house."

"I am sorry for it; his house cannot be a proper one for the reception of a young lady. When the Dean made application that I would be one of your guardians, I instantly sent him a refusal, as is my custom upon all such occasions, which indeed occur to me with a frequency extremely importunate: but the Dean was a man for whom I had really a regard, and therefore, when I found my refusal had affected him, I suffered myself to be prevailed upon to indulge him, contrary not only to my general rule, but to my inclination."

Here he stopt, as if to receive some compliment, but Cecilia, very little disposed to pay him any, went no farther than an inclination of the head.

"I knew not, however," he continued, "at the time I was induced to give my consent, with whom I was to be associated; nor could I have imagined the Dean so little conversant with the distinctions of the world, as to disgrace me with inferior coadjutors: but the moment I learnt the state of the affair, I insisted upon withdrawing both my name and countenance."

Here again he paused; not in expectation of an answer from Cecilia, but merely to give her time to marvel in what manner he had at last been melted.

"The Dean," he resumed, "was then very ill; my displeasure, I believe, hurt him. I was sorry for it; he was a worthy man, and had not meant to offend me; in the end, I accepted his apology, and was even persuaded to accept the office. You have a right, therefore, to consider yourself as *personally* my ward: and though I do not think proper to mix much with your other guardians, I shall always be ready to serve and advise you, and much pleased to see you."

"You do me honour, sir;" said Cecilia, extremely wearied of such graciousness, and rising to be gone.

"Pray sit still," said he, with a smile; "I have not many engagements for this morning. You must give me some account how you pass your time. Are you much out? The Harrels, I am told, live at a great expense. What is their establishment?"

"I don't exactly know, sir."

"They are decent sort of people, I believe; are they not?"

"I hope so, sir!"

"And they have a tolerable acquaintance, I believe: I am told so; for I know nothing of them."

"They have, at least, a very numerous one, sir."

"Well, my dear," said he, taking her hand, "now you have once ventured to come, don't be apprehensive of repeating your visits: I must introduce you to Mrs. Delvile; I am sure she will be happy to show you any kindness. Come, therefore, when you please, and without scruple. I would call upon you myself, but am fearful of being embarrassed by the people with whom you live."

He then rang his bell, and with the same ceremonies which had attended her admittance, she was conducted back to her carriage.

And here died away all hope of putting into execution, during her minority, the plan of which the formation had given her so much pleasure. She found that her present situation, however wide of her wishes, was by no means the most disagreeable in which she could be placed; she was tired, indeed, of dissipation, and shocked at the sight of unfeeling extravagance; but, notwithstanding the houses of each of her other guardians were exempt from these

particular vices, she saw not any prospect of happiness with either of them; vulgarity seemed leagued with avarice to drive her from the mansion of Mr. Briggs, and haughtiness with ostentation to exclude her from that of Mr. Delvile.

She came back, therefore, to Portman-square, disappointed in her hopes, and sick both of those whom she quitted, and of those to whom she was returning; but in going to her own apartment Mrs. Harrel, eagerly stopping her, begged she would come into the drawing-room, where she promised her a most agreeable surprise.

Cecilia, for an instant, imagined that some old acquaintance was just arrived out of the country; but, upon her entrance, she saw only Mr. Harrel and some workmen, and found that the agreeable surprise was to proceed from the sight of an elegant awning, prepared for one of the inner apartments, to be fixed over a long dessert-table, which was to be ornamented with various devices of cut glass.

"Did you ever see any thing so beautiful in your life?" cried Mrs. Harrel; "and when the table is covered with the coloured ices, and those sort of things, it will be as beautiful again. We shall have it ready for Tuesday se'nnight."

"I understood you were engaged to go to the masquerade?"

"So we shall; only we intend to see masks at home first."

"I have some thoughts," said Mr. Harrel, leading the way to another small room, "of running up a flight of steps, and a little light gallery here, and so making a little orchestra. What would such a thing come to, Mr. Tomkins?"

"O, a trifle, sir," answered Mr. Tomkins, "a mere nothing."

"Well, then, give orders for it, and let it be done directly. I don't care how slight it is, but pray let it be very elegant. Won't it be a great addition, Miss Beverley?"

"Indeed, sir, I don't think it seems to be very necessary," said Cecilia; who wished much to take that moment for reminding him of the debt he had contracted with Mr. Arnott.

"Lord, Miss Beverley is so grave!" cried Mrs. Harrel; "nothing of this sort gives her any pleasure."

"She has indeed," answered Cecilia, trying to smile, "not much taste for the pleasure of being always surrounded by workmen."

And, as soon as she was able, she retired to her room, feeling, both on the part of Mr. Arnott and the Hills, a resentment at the injustice of Mr. Harrel, which fixed her in the resolution of breaking through that facility of compliance, which had hitherto confined her disapprobation to her own breast, and venturing, henceforward, to mark the opinion she entertained of his conduct, by consulting nothing but reason and principle in her own.

Her first effort towards this change was made immediately, in begging to be excused from accompanying Mrs. Harrel to a large card assembly that evening.

Mrs. Harrel, extremely surprised, asked a thousand times the reason of her refusal, imagining it to proceed from some very extraordinary cause; nor was she, without the utmost difficulty, persuaded at last that she merely meant to pass one evening by herself.

But the next day, when the refusal was repeated, she was still more incredulous; it seemed to her impossible that any one who had the power to be encircled with company, could by choice spend a second afternoon alone; and she was so urgent in her request to be entrusted with the secret, that Cecilia found no way left to appease her, but by frankly confessing she was weary of eternal visiting, and sick of living always in a crowd.

"Suppose, then," cried she, "I send for Miss Larolles to come and sit with you?"

Cecilia, not without laughing, declined this proposal, assuring her that no such assistant was necessary for her entertainment: yet it was not till after a long contention that she was able to convince her there would be no cruelty in leaving her by herself.

The following day, however, her trouble diminished; for Mrs. Harrel, ceasing to be surprised, thought little more of the matter, and forebore any earnestness of solicitation; and, from that time, she suffered her to follow her own humour with very little opposition. Cecilia was much

concerned to find her so unmoved; and not less disappointed at the indifference of Mr. Harrel, who, being seldom of the same parties with his lady, and seeing her too rarely either to communicate or hear any domestic occurrences, far from being struck, as she had hoped, with the new way in which she passed her time, was scarce sensible of the change, and interfered not upon the subject.

Sir Robert Floyer, who continued to see her when he dined in Portman-square, often enquired what she did with herself in an evening; but never obtaining any satisfactory answer, he concluded her engagements were with people to whom he was a stranger.

Poor Mr. Arnott felt the cruellest disappointment in being deprived of the happiness of attending her in her evenings' expeditions, when, whether he conversed with her or not, he was sure of the indulgence of seeing and hearing her.

But the greatest sufferer from this new regulation was Mr. Monckton, who, unable any longer to endure the mortifications of which his morning visits to Portman-square had been productive, determined not to trust his temper with such provocations in future, but rather to take his chance of meeting with her elsewhere: for which purpose, he assiduously frequented all public places, and sought acquaintance with every family and every person he believed to be known to the Harrels: but his patience was unrewarded, and his diligence unsuccessful; he met with her nowhere, and, while he continued his search, fancied every evil power was at work to lead him whither he was sure never to find her.

Meanwhile Cecilia passed her time greatly to her own satisfaction. Her first care was to assist and comfort the Hills. She went herself to their lodgings; ordered and paid for whatever the physician prescribed to the sick man; gave clothes to the children; and money and various necessaries to the wife. She found that the poor carpenter was not likely to languish much longer, and therefore, for the present, only thought of alleviating his sufferings, by procuring him such indulgencies as were authorised by his physician, and enabling his family to abate so much of

their labour as was requisite for obtaining time to nurse and attend him; but she meant, as soon as the last duties should be paid him, to assist his survivors in attempting to follow some better and more profitable business.

Her next solicitude was to furnish herself with a well-chosen collection of books; and this employment, which to a lover of literature, young and ardent in its pursuit, is perhaps the mind's first luxury, proved a source of entertainment so fertile and delightful that it left her nothing to wish.

She confined not her acquisitions to the limits of her present power, but, as she was laying in a stock for future as well as immediate advantage, she was restrained by no expense from gratifying her taste and her inclination. She had now entered the last year of her minority, and therefore had not any doubt that her guardians would permit her to take up whatever sum she should require for such a purpose.

And thus, in the exercise of charity, the search of knowledge, and the enjoyment of quiet, serenely in innocent philosophy passed the hours of Cecilia.

CHAPTER III.

A MASQUERADE.

THE first check this tranquillity received was upon the day of the masquerade, the preparations for which have been already mentioned. The whole house was then in commotion, from various arrangements and improvements which were planned for almost every apartment that was to be opened for the reception of masks. Cecilia herself, however little pleased with the attendant circumstance of wantonly accumulating unnecessary debts, was not the least animated of the party; she was a stranger to every diversion of this sort, and from the novelty of the scene, hoped for uncommon satisfaction.

At noon Mrs. Harrel sent for her to consult upon a new

scheme which occurred to Mr. Harrel, of fixing in fantastic forms some coloured lamps in the drawing room.

While they were all discoursing this matter over, one of the servants, who had two or three times whispered some message to Mr. Harrel, and then retired, said, in a voice not too low to be heard by Cecilia, "Indeed, sir, I can't get him away."

"He's an insolent scoundrel," answered Mr. Harrel; "however, if I must speak to him, I must;" and went out of the room.

Mrs. Harrel still continued to exercise her fancy upon this new project, calling both upon Mr. Arnott and Cecilia to admire her taste and contrivance; till they were all interrupted by the loudness of a voice from below stairs, which frequently repeated, "Sir, I can wait no longer! I have been put off till I can be put off no more!"

Startled by this, Mrs. Harrel ceased her employment, and they all stood still and silent. They then heard Mr. Harrel with much softness answer, "Good Mr. Rawlins, have a little patience; I shall receive a large sum of money to-morrow, or next day, and you may then depend upon being paid."

"Sir," cried the man, "you have so often told me the same, that it goes just for nothing: I have had a right to it a long time, and I have a bill to make up that can't be waited for any longer."

"Certainly, Mr. Rawlins," replied Mr. Harrel, with still increasing gentleness, "and certainly you shall have it: nobody means to dispute your right; I only beg you to wait a day, or two days at furthest, and you may then depend upon being paid. And you shall not be the worse for obliging me; I will never employ anybody else, and I shall have occasion for you very soon, as I intend to make some alterations at Violet-Bank that will be very considerable."

"Sir," said the man, still louder, "it is of no use your employing me, if I can never get my money: All my workmen must be paid whether I am or no; and so, if I must needs speak to a lawyer, why there's no help for it."

"Did you ever hear anything so impertinent?" exclaimed Mrs. Harrel; "I am sure Mr. Harrel will be very

much to blame, if ever he lets that man do any thing more for him."

Just then Mr. Harrel appeared, and, with an air of affected unconcern, said, "Here's the most insolent rascal of a mason below stairs I ever met with in my life; he has come upon me, quite unexpectedly, with a bill of £400, and won't leave the house without the money. Brother Arnott, I wish you would do me the favour to speak to the fellow, for I could not bear to stay with him any longer."

"Do you wish me to give him a draught for the money upon my own banker?"

"That would be vastly obliging," answered Mr. Harrel, "and I will give you my note for it directly. And so we shall get rid of this fellow at once: and he shall do nothing more for me as long as he lives. I will run up a new building at Violet-Bank next summer, if only to show him what a job he has lost."

"Pay the man at once, there's a good brother," cried Mrs. Harrel, "and let's hear no more of him."

The two gentlemen then retired to another room, and Mrs. Harrel, after praising the extreme good-nature of her brother, of whom she was very fond, and declaring that the mason's impertinence had quite frightened her, again returned to her plan of new decorations.

Cecilia, amazed at this indifference to the state of her husband's affairs, began to think it was her own duty to talk with her upon the subject: and therefore, after a silence so marked that Mrs. Harrel enquired into its reason, she said, "Will you pardon me, my dear friend, if I own I am rather surprised to see you continue these preparations?"

"Lord, why?"

"Because, any fresh unnecessary expenses just now, till Mr. Harrel actually receives the money he talks of ——"

"Why, my dear, the expense of such a thing as this is nothing; in Mr. Harrel's affairs I assure you it will not be at all felt. Besides, he expects money so soon, that it is just the same as if he had it already."

Cecilia, unwilling to be too officious, began then to express her admiration of the goodness and generosity of Mr. Arnott; taking frequent occasion, in the course of her

praise, to insinuate that those only can be properly liberal, who are just and economical.

She had prepared no masquerade habit for this evening, as Mrs. Harrel, by whose direction she was guided, informed her it was not necessary for ladies to be masked at home, and said she should receive her company herself in a dress which she might wear upon any other occasion. Mr. Harrel, also, and Mr. Arnott made not any alteration in their appearance.

At about eight o'clock the business of the evening began; and before nine, there were so many masks that Cecilia wished she had herself made one of the number, as she was far more conspicuous in being almost the only female in a common dress, than any masquerade habit could have made her. The novelty of the scene, however, joined to the general air of gaiety diffused throughout the company, shortly lessened her embarrassment; and after being somewhat familiarised to the abruptness with which the masks approached her, and the freedom with which they looked at or addressed her, the first confusion of her situation subsided, and in her curiosity to watch others, she ceased to observe how much she was watched herself.

Her expectations of entertainment were not only fulfilled but surpassed; the variety of dresses, the medley of characters, the quick succession of figures, and the ludicrous mixture of groups, kept her attention unwearied: while the conceited efforts at wit, the total thoughtlessness of consistency, and the ridiculous incongruity of the language with the appearance, were incitements to surprise and diversion without end. Even the local cant of, *Do you know me? Who are you?* and *I know you;* with the sly pointing of the finger, the arch nod of the head, and the pert squeak of the voice, though wearisome to those who frequent such assemblies, were, to her unhackneyed observation, additional subjects of amusement.

Soon after nine o'clock, every room was occupied, and the common crowd of regular masqueraders were dispersed through the various apartments. Dominos of no character, and fancy-dresses of no meaning, made, as is usual at such meetings, the general herd of the company: for the rest, the men were Spaniards, chimney-sweepers, Turks, watch-

men, conjurers, and old women; and the ladies, shepherdesses, orange girls, Circassians, gipseys, haymakers, and sultanas.[1]

Cecilia had, as yet, escaped any address beyond the customary enquiry of *Do you know me?* and a few passing compliments; but when the rooms filled, and the general crowd gave general courage, she was attacked in a manner more pointed and singular.

The very first mask who approached her, seemed to have nothing less in view than preventing the approach of every other: yet had he little reason to hope favour for himself, as the person he represented, of all others least alluring to the view, was the devil! He was black from head to foot, save that two red horns seemed to issue from his forehead; his face was so completely covered, that the sight only of his eyes was visible, his feet were cloven, and in his right hand he held a wand the colour of fire.

Waving this wand as he advanced towards Cecilia, he cleared a semi-circular space before her chair, thrice with the most profound reverence bowed to her, thrice turned himself around with sundry grimaces, and then fiercely planted himself at her side.

Cecilia was amused by his mummery, but felt no great delight in his guardianship, and, after a short time, arose, with intention to walk to another place; but the black gentleman, adroitly moving round her, held out his hand to obstruct her passage; and therefore, preferring captivity to resistance, she was again obliged to seat herself.

An Hotspur, who just then made his appearance, was strutting boldly towards her; but the devil, rushing furiously forwards, placed himself immediately between them. Hotspur, putting his arms a-kembo with an air of defiance,

[1] "In the evening we went to Lady Townshend's, who let in masques, and a great number she had. Lady Villiers was a sultana, as fine as any Eastern princess I ever redde of, a most immense profusion of diamonds all over her. Miss Dutton was a fine figure in the character of Almeda; there was a most jolly party of milkmaids with the May-day garland, Sir Watkin Williams Wynne carried the pail, and was a most excellent figure. Lady Williams Wynne, Lady Francis Wyndham, and another danced round the pail in true milkmaid style."—Mrs. Harris in the *Letters of the first Lord Malmesbury*. Mrs. Harris, who was wife of the author of "Hermes," spelt, as he did, "redde" for read.

gave a loud stamp with his right foot, and then—marched into another room!

The victorious devil ostentatiously waved his wand, and returned to his station.

Mr. Arnott, who had never moved two yards from Cecilia, knowing her too well to suppose she received any pleasure from being thus distinguished, modestly advanced to offer his assistance in releasing her from confinement; but the devil, again describing a circle with his wand, gave him three such smart raps on the head, that his hair was disordered, and his face covered with powder. A general laugh succeeded; and Mr. Arnott, too diffident to brave raillery, or withstand shame, retired in confusion.

The black gentleman seemed now to have all authority in his own hands, and his wand was brandished with more ferocity than ever, no one again venturing to invade the domain he thought fit to appropriate for his own.

At length, however, a Don Quixote appeared, and every mask in the room was eager to point out to him the imprisonment of Cecilia.

This Don Quixote was accoutred with tolerable exactness, according to the description of the admirable Cervantes; his armour was rusty, his helmet was a barber's bason, his shield a pewter dish, and his lance an old sword fastened to a slim cane. His figure, tall and thin, was well adapted to the character he represented; and his mask, which depicted a lean and haggard face, worn with care, yet fiery with crazy passions, exhibited, with propriety the most striking, the knight of the doleful countenance.

The complaints against the devil, with which immediately and from all quarters he was assailed, he heard with the most solemn taciturnity: after which, making a motion for general silence, he stalked majestically towards Cecilia, but stopping short of the limits prescribed by her guard, he kissed his spear in token of allegiance, and then, slowly dropping upon one knee, began the following address:

"Most incomparable Princess!

THUS humbly prostrate at the feet of your divine and ineffable beauty, graciously permit the most pitiful of your servitors, Don Quixote De la Mancha, from your high and

tender grace, to salute the fair boards, which sustain your corporeal machine."

Then, bending down his head, he kissed the floor; after which, raising himself upon his feet, he proceeded in his speech.

"Report, O most fair and unmatchable virgin! daringly affirmeth, that a certain discourteous person, who calleth himself the devil, even now, and in thwart of your fair inclinations, keepeth and detaineth your irradiant frame in hostile thraldom. Suffer then, magnanimous and undescribable lady! that I, the most groveling of your unworthy vassals, do sift the fair truth out of this foul sieve, and conjure your highness veritably to inform me, if that honourable chair, which haply supports your terrestrial perfections, containeth the inimitable burthen with the free and legal consent of your celestial spirit?"

Here he ceased: and Cecilia, who laughed at this characteristic address, though she had not courage to answer it, again made an effort to quit her place, but again by the wand of her black persecutor was prevented.

This little incident was answer sufficient for the valorous knight, who indignantly exclaimed,

"Sublime Lady!

I BESEECH but of your exquisite mercy to refrain mouldering the clay composition of my unworthy body to impalpable dust, by the refulgence of those bright stars vulgarly called eyes, till I have lawfully wreaked my vengeance upon this unobliging caitiff, for his most disloyal obstruction of your highness's adorable pleasure."

Then, bowing low, he turned from her, and thus addressed his intended antagonist:

"Uncourtly Miscreant!

THE black garment which envelopeth thy most unpleasant person, seemeth even of the most ravishing whiteness, in compare of the black bile which floateth within thy sable exterior. Behold, then, my gauntlet! yet ere I deign to be the instrument of thy extirpation, O thou most mean and ignoble enemy! that the honour of Don Quixote de la Mancha may not be sullied by thy extinction, I do here confer upon thee the honour of knighthood, dubbing thee, by my own sword, Don Devil, knight of the horrible physiognomy."

He then attempted to strike his shoulder with his spear, but the black gentleman adroitly eluding the blow, defended himself with his wand: a mock fight ensued, conducted on both sides with admirable dexterity; but Cecilia, less eager to view it than to become again a free agent, made her escape into another apartment; while the rest of the ladies, though they almost all screamed, jumped upon chairs and sofas to peep at the combat.

In conclusion, the wand of the knight of the horrible physiognomy, was broken against the shield of the knight of the doleful countenance; upon which Don Quixote called out *Victoria!* The whole room echoed the sound; the unfortunate new knight retired abruptly into another apartment; and the conquering Don, seizing the fragments of the weapon of his vanquished enemy, went out in search of the lady for whose releasement he had fought: and the moment he found her, prostrating both himself and the trophies at her feet, he again pressed the floor with his lips; and then, slowly arising, repeated his reverences with added formality, and, without waiting her acknowledgments, gravely retired.

The moment he departed, a Minerva, not stately, nor austere, nor marching in warlike majesty, but gay and airy,

Tripping on light fantastic toe,

ran up to Cecilia, and squeaked out, "Do you know me?"

"Not," answered she, instantly recollecting Miss Larolles, "by your *appearance*, I own! but by your *voice*, I think I can guess you."

"I was monstrous sorry," returned the goddess, without understanding this distinction, "that I was not at home when you called upon me. Pray how do you like my dress? I assure you I think it's the prettiest here. But do you know there's the most shocking thing in the world happened in the next room? I really believe there's a common chimney-sweeper got in! I assure you it's enough to frighten one to death, for every time he moves, the soot smells so you can't think; quite real soot, I assure you! only conceive how nasty! I declare I wish with all my heart it would suffocate him!"

Here she was interrupted by the re-appearance of *Don Devil;* who, looking around him, and perceiving that his antagonist was gone, again advanced to Cecilia: not, however, with the authority of his first approach, for with his wand he had lost much of his power; but to recompense himself for this disgrace, he had recourse to another method equally effectual for keeping his prey to himself, for he began a growling, so dismal and disagreeable, that while many of the ladies, and, among the first, the *Goddess of Wisdom and Courage*, ran away to avoid him, the men all stood aloof, to watch what next was to follow.

Cecilia now became seriously uneasy; for she was made an object of general attention, yet could neither speak nor be spoken to. She could suggest no motive for behaviour so whimsical, though she imagined the only person who could have the assurance to practise it was Sir Robert Floyer.

After some time spent thus disagreeably, a white domino, who for a few minutes had been a very attentive spectator, suddenly came forward, and exclaiming, "*I'll cross him though he blast me!*" rushed upon the fiend, and grasping one of his horns, called out to a Harlequin who stood near him, "Harlequin! do you fear to fight the devil?"

"Not I, truly," answered Harlequin, whose voice immediately betrayed young Morrice, and who, issuing from the crowd, whirled himself round before the black gentleman with yet more agility than he had himself done before Cecilia, giving him from time to time, many smart blows on his shoulders, head, and back, with his wooden sword.

The rage of *Don Devil* at this attack seemed somewhat beyond what a masquerade character rendered necessary; he foamed at the mouth with resentment, and defended himself with so much vehemence, that he soon drove poor Harlequin into another room: but, when he would have returned to his prey, the genius of pantomime, curbed, but not subdued, at the instigation of the white domino, returned to the charge, and by a perpetual rotation of attack and retreat, kept him in constant employment, pursuing him from room to room, and teasing him without cessation or mercy.

Meantime Cecilia, delighted at being released, hurried

into a corner, where she hoped to breathe and look on in quiet; and the white domino, having exhorted Harlequin to torment the tormentor, and keep him at bay, followed her with congratulations upon her recovered freedom.

"It is you," answered she, "I ought to thank for it, which indeed I do most heartily. I was so tired of confinement, that my mind seemed almost as little at liberty as my person."

"Your persecutor, I presume," said the domino, "is known to you."

"I hope so," answered she, "because there is one man I suspect, and I should be sorry to find there was another equally disagreeable."

"O, depend upon it," cried he, "there are many who would be happy to confine you in the same manner; neither have you much cause for complaint; you have, doubtless, been the aggressor, and played this game yourself without mercy, for I read in your face the captivity of thousands: have you, then, any right to be offended at the spirit of retaliation which one, out of such numbers, has courage to exert in return?"

"I protest," cried Cecilia, "I took you for my defender! whence is it you are become my accuser?"

"From seeing the danger to which my incautious knight errantry has exposed me: I begin, indeed, to take you for a very mischievous sort of person; and I fear the poor devil from whom I rescued you, will be amply revenged for his disgrace, by finding that the first use you make of your freedom, is to doom your deliverer to bondage."

Here they were disturbed by the extreme loquacity of two opposite parties: and listening attentively, they heard from one side, "My angel! fairest of creatures! goddess of my heart!" uttered in accents of rapture; while from the other, the vociferation was so violent, they could distinctly hear nothing.

The white domino satisfied his curiosity by going to both parties; and then, returning to Cecilia, said, "Can you conjecture who was making those soft speeches? a Shylock! his knife all the time in his hand, and his design, doubtless, to *cut as near the heart as possible!* while the loud cackling from the other side, is owing to the riotous merriment of

a noisy Mentor! When next I hear a disturbance, I shall expect to see some simpering Pythagoras stunned by his talkative disciples."

"To own the truth," said Cecilia, "the almost universal neglect of the characters assumed by these masquers, has been the chief source of my entertainment this evening: for at a place of this sort, the next best thing to a character well supported, is a character ridiculously burlesqued."

"You cannot, then, have wanted amusement," returned the domino; "for among all the persons assembled in these apartments, I have seen only three who have seemed conscious that any change but that of dress was necessary to disguise them."

"And pray who are those?"

"A Don Quixote, a school-master, and your friend the devil."

"O, call him not my friend!" exclaimed Cecilia; "for indeed in or out of that garb he is particularly my aversion."

"*My* friend, then, I will call him," said the domino; "for so, were he ten devils, I must think him, since I owe to him the honour of conversing with you. And, after all, to give him his due, to which, you know, he is even proverbially entitled, he has shown such abilities in the performance of his part, so much skill in the display of malice, and so much perseverance in the art of tormenting, that I cannot but respect his ingenuity and capacity. And, indeed, if instead of an evil genius, he had represented a guardian angel, he could not have shown a more refined taste in his choice of an object to hover about."

Just then they were approached by a young hay-maker, to whom the white domino called out, "You look as gay and as brisk as if fresh from the hay-field, after only half a day's work. Pray how is it you pretty lasses find employment for the winter?"

"How?" cried she, pertly; "why the same as for the summer!" And pleased with her own readiness at repartee, without feeling the ignorance it betrayed, she tript lightly on.

Immediately after, the school-master, mentioned by the white domino, advanced to Cecilia. His dress was merely

a long wrapping gown of green stuff, a pair of red slippers, and a woollen night-cap of the same colour; while, as the symbol of his profession, he held a rod in his hand.

"Ah, fair lady," he cried, "how soothing were it to the austerity of my life, how softening to the rigidity of my manners, might I—without a *breaking out of bounds* which I ought to be the first to discourage, and a 'confusion to all order' for which the school-boy should himself chastise his master, be permitted to cast at your feet this emblem of my authority! and to forget, in the softness of your conversation, all the roughness of discipline!"

"No, no," cried Cecilia, "I will not be answerable for such corruption of taste!"

"This repulse," answered he, "is just what I feared; for alas! under what pretence could a poor miserable pedagogue presume to approach you? Should I examine you in the dead languages, would not your living accents charm from me all power of reproof? Could I look at you, and hear a false concord? Should I doom you to water-gruel as a dunce, would not my subsequent remorse make me want it myself as a madman? Were your fair hand spread out to me for correction, should I help applying my lips to it, instead of my rat-tan? If I ordered you to be *called up*, should I ever remember to have you sent back? And if I commanded you to stand in a corner, how should I forbear following you thither myself?"

Cecilia, who had no difficulty in knowing this pretended school-master for Mr. Gosport, was readily beginning to propose conditions, for according him her favour, when their ears were assailed by a forced phthisical cough, which they found proceeded from an apparent old woman, who was a young man in disguise, and whose hobbling gait, grunting voice, and most grievous asthmatic complaints, seemed greatly enjoyed and applauded by the company.

"How true is it, yet how inconsistent," cried the white domino, "that while we all desire to live long, we have all a horror of being old! The figure now passing is not meant to ridicule any particular person, nor to stigmatize any particular absurdity; its sole view is to expose to contempt and derision the general and natural infirmities of age! And the design is not more disgusting than impolitic; for why,

while so carefully we guard from all approaches of death, should we close the only avenues to happiness in long life, respect and tenderness?"

Cecilia, delighted both by the understanding and humanity of her new acquaintance, and pleased at being joined by Mr. Gosport, was beginning to be perfectly satisfied with her situation, when, creeping softly towards her, she again perceived the black gentleman.

"Ah!" cried she, with some vexation, "here comes my old tormentor! Screen me from him if possible, or he will again make me his prisoner."

"Fear not," cried the white domino; "he is an evil spirit, and we will surely lay him. If one spell fails, we must try another."

Cecilia then perceiving Mr. Arnott, begged he would also assist in barricading her from the fiend who so obstinately pursued her.

Mr. Arnott most gratefully acceded to the proposal; and the white domino, who acted as commanding officer, assigned to each his station: he desired Cecilia would keep quietly to her seat, appointed the school-master to be her guard on the left, took possession himself of the opposite post, and ordered Mr. Arnott to stand sentinel in front.

This arrangement being settled, the guards of the right and left wings instantly secured their places; but while Mr. Arnott was considering whether it were better to face the besieged, or the enemy, the arch-foe rushed suddenly before him, and laid himself down at the feet of Cecilia.

Mr. Arnott, extremely disconcerted, began a serious expostulation upon the ill-breeding of this behaviour; but the devil, resting all excuse upon supporting his character, only answered by growling.

The white domino seemed to hesitate for a moment in what manner to conduct himself, and with a quickness that marked his chagrin, said to Cecilia, "You told me you knew him—has he any right to follow you?"

"If he thinks he has," answered she, a little alarmed by his question, "this is no time to dispute it."

And then, to avoid any hazard of altercation, she discreetly forebore making further complaints, preferring any

persecution to seriously remonstrating with a man of so much insolence as the Baronet.

The school-master, laughing at the whole transaction, only said, "And pray, madam, after playing the devil with all mankind, what right have you to complain that one man plays the devil with you?"

"We shall, at least, fortify you," said the white domino, "from any other assailant: no three-headed Cerberus could protect you more effectually: but you will not, therefore, fancy yourself in the lower regions; for, if I mistake not, the torment of *three guardians* is nothing new to you."

"And how," said Cecilia, surprised, "should you know of my three guardians? I hope I am not quite encompassed with evil spirits!"

"No," answered he; "you will find me as inoffensive as the hue of the domino I wear;—and would I could add as insensible!"

"This black gentleman," said the school-master, "who, and very innocently, I was going to call your *black-guard*, has as noble and fiend-like a disposition as I remember to have seen; for, without even attempting to take any diversion himself, he seems gratified to his heart's content, in excluding from it the lady he serves."

"He does me an honour I could well dispense with," said Cecilia; "but I hope he has some secret satisfaction in his situation, which pays him for its apparent inconvenience."

Here the black gentleman half raised himself, and attempted to take her hand; she started, and with much displeasure drew it back: he then growled, and again sunk prostrate.

"This is a fiend," said the school-master, "who to himself sayeth *Budge not!* let his conscience never so often say *Budge!* Well, fair lady, your fortifications, however, may now be deemed impregnable, since I, with a flourish of my rod, can keep off the young by recollection of the past, and since the fiend, with a jut of his foot, may keep off the old from dread of the future!"

Here a Turk, richly habited and resplendent with jewels, stalked towards Cecilia, and, having regarded her some

time, called out, "I have been looking hard about me the whole evening, and, faith, I have seen nothing handsome before!"

The moment he opened his mouth, his voice, to her utter astonishment, betrayed Sir Robert Floyer! "Mercy on me," cried she aloud, and pointing to the fiend, "who, then, can this possibly be!"

"Do you not know?" cried the white domino.

"I thought I had known with certainty," answered she; "but I now find I was mistaken."

"He is a happy man," said the school-master, sarcastically looking at the Turk, "who has removed your suspicions only by appearing in another character!"

"Why, what the deuce, then," exclaimed the Turk, "have you taken that black dog there for *me?*"

Before this question could be answered, an offensive smell of soot making every body look around the room, the chimney-sweeper already mentioned by Miss Larolles was perceived to enter it. Every way he moved, a passage was cleared for him, as the company, with general disgust, retreated wherever he advanced. He was short, and seemed somewhat incommoded by his dress; he held his soot-bag over one arm, and his shovel under the other. As soon as he espied Cecilia, whose situation was such as to prevent her eluding him, he hooted aloud, and came stumping up to her. "Ah, ha," he cried, "found at last;" then, throwing down his shovel, he opened the mouth of his bag, and pointing waggishly to her head, said, "Come, shall I pop you?—A good place for naughty girls;—in, I say, poke in!——cram you up the chimney."

And then he put forth his sooty hands to reach her cap.

Cecilia, though she instantly knew the dialect of her guardian Mr. Briggs, was not therefore the more willing to be so handled, and started back to save herself from his touch; the white domino also came forward, and spread out his arms as a defence to her, while the devil, who was still before her, again began to growl.

"Ah, ha!" cried the chimney-sweeper, laughing, "so did not know me? Poor duck! won't hurt you; don't be frightened; nothing but old guardian; all a joke!" And then, patting her cheek with his dirty hand, and nodding

at her with much kindness, "Pretty dove," he added, "be of good heart! sha'n't be meddled with; come to see after you. Heard of your tricks; thought I'd catch you!—come o'purpose.—Poor duck! did not know me! ha! ha! —good joke enough!"

"What do you mean, you dirty dog," cried the Turk, "by touching that lady?"

"Won't tell!" answered he; "not your business. Got a good right. Who cares for pearls? Nothing but French beads;" pointing with a sneer to his turban. Then, again addressing Cecilia; "Fine doings!" he continued. "Here's a place! never saw the like before! turn a man's noddle! —All goings out; no comings in; wax candles in every room; servants thick as mushrooms! And where's the cash? Who's to pay the piper? Come to more than a guinea; warrant Master Harrel thinks that nothing!"

"A guinea!" contemptuously repeated the Turk; "and what do you suppose a guinea will do?"

"What? Why keep a whole family handsome a week; —never spend so much myself; no, nor half neither."

"Why then how the devil do you live? Do you beg?"

"Beg! Who should beg of? You?—Got any thing to give? Are warm?"

"Take the trouble to speak more respectfully, sir!" said the Turk, haughtily; "I see you are some low fellow, and I shall not put up with your impudence."

"Shall, shall! I say!" answered the chimney-sweeper sturdily. "Hark'ee, my duck," chucking Cecilia under the chin; "don't be cajoled, nick that spark! Never mind gold trappings; none of his own; all a take-in; hired for eighteen pence; not worth a groat. Never set your heart on a fine outside, nothing within. Bristol stones won't buy stock: only wants to chouse you."

"What do you mean by that, you little old scrub?" cried the imperious Turk; "would you provoke me to soil my fingers by pulling that beastly snub nose?" For Mr. Briggs had saved himself any actual mask, by merely blacking his face with soot.

"Beastly snub nose!" sputtered out the chimney-sweeper, in much wrath; "good nose enough; don't want a better; good as another man's. Where's the harm on't?"

"How could this black-guard get in?" cried the Turk; "I believe he's a mere common chimney-sweeper out of the streets, for he's all over dirt and filth. I never saw such a dress at a masquerade before in my life."

"All the better," returned the other; "would not change. What do think it cost?"

"Cost? Why not a crown."

"A crown? Ha! ha!—a pot o' beer! Little Tom borrowed it! had it of our own sweep; said 'twas for himself. I bid him a pint; rascal would not take less."

"Did your late uncle," said the white domino, in a low voice to Cecilia, "choose for two of your guardians, Mr. Harrel and Mr. Briggs, to give you an early lesson upon the opposite errors of profusion and meanness?"

"My uncle?" cried Cecilia, starting; "were you acquainted with my uncle?"

"No," said he; "for my happiness I knew him not."

"You would have owed no loss of happiness to an acquaintance with him," said Cecilia, very seriously; "for he was one who dispensed to his friends nothing but good."

"Perhaps so," said the domino; "but I fear I should have found the good he dispensed through his niece not quite unmixed with evil!"

"What's here?" cried the chimney-sweeper, stumbling over the fiend; "what's this black thing? Don't like it; looks like the devil. You sha'n't stay with it; carry you away; take care of you myself."

He then offered Cecilia his hand; but the black gentleman, raising himself upon his knees before her, paid her, in dumb show, the humblest devoirs, yet prevented her from removing.

"Ah! ha!" cried the chimney-sweeper, significantly nodding his head; "smell a rat! a sweet-heart in disguise. No bamboozling! it won't do; a'n't so soon put upon. If you've got any thing to say, tell *me*, that's the way. Where's the cash? Got ever a *rental?* Are warm? That's the point. Are warm?"

The fiend, without returning any answer, continued his homage to Cecilia; at which the enraged chimney-sweeper exclaimed, "Come, come with me! won't be imposed upon; an old fox,—understand trap!"

He then again held out his hand, but Cecilia, pointing to the fiend, answered, "How can I come, sir?"

"Show you the way," cried he; "shovel him off." And taking his shovel, he very roughly set about removing him.

The fiend then began a yell so horrible, that it disturbed the whole company; but the chimney-sweeper, only saying "Aye, aye, blacky, growl away, blacky,—makes no odds,—" sturdily continued his work; and, as the fiend had no chance of resisting so coarse an antagonist without a serious struggle, he was presently compelled to change his ground.

"Warm work!" cried the victorious chimney-sweeper, taking off his wig, and wiping his head with the sleeves of his dress; "pure warm work this!"

Cecilia, once again freed from her persecutor, instantly quitted her place, almost equally desirous to escape the haughty Turk, who was peculiarly her aversion, and the facetious chimney-sweeper, whose vicinity, either on account of his dress or his conversation, was by no means desirable. She was not, however, displeased that the white domino and the school-master still continued to attend her.

"Pray look," said the white domino, as they entered another apartment, "at that figure of Hope; is there any in the room half so expressive of despondency?"

"The reason, however," answered the school-master, "is obvious; that light and beautiful silver anchor upon which she reclines, presents an occasion irresistible for an attitude of elegant dejection; and the assumed character is always given up, where an opportunity offers to display any beauty, or manifest any perfection in the dear proper person!"

"But why," said Cecilia, "should she assume the character of *Hope?* Could she not have been equally dejected, and equally elegant as Niobe, or some tragedy queen?"

"But she does not assume the character," answered the school-master; "she does not even think of it: the dress is her object, and that alone fills up all her ideas. Enquire of almost any body in the room concerning the persons

they seem to represent, and you will find their ignorance more gross than you can imagine; they have not once thought upon the subject; accident, or convenience, or caprice has alone directed their choice."

A tall and elegant youth now approached them, whose laurels and harp announced Apollo. The white domino immediately enquired of him if the noise and turbulence of the company, had any chance of being stilled into silence and rapture, by the divine music of the inspired god?

"No," answered he, pointing to the room in which was erected the new gallery, and whence, as he spoke, issued the sound of an *hautboy;* "there is a flute playing there already."

"O for a Midas," cried the white domino, "to return to this leather-eared god the disgrace he received from him!"

They now proceeded to the apartment which had been lately fitted up for refreshments, and which was so full of company, that they entered it with difficulty. And here they were again joined by Minerva, who, taking Cecilia's hand, said, "Lord, how glad I am you've got away from that frightful black mask! I can't conceive who he is; nobody can find out; it's monstrous odd, but he has not spoke a word all night, and he makes such a shocking noise when people touch him, that I assure you it's enough to put one in a fright."

"And pray," cried the school-master, disguising his voice, "how camest thou to take the helmet of Minerva for a fool's cap?"

"Lord, I have not," cried she innocently; "why the whole dress is Minerva's; don't you see?"

"My dear child," answered he, "thou couldst as well with that little figure pass for a Goliah, as with that little wit for a Pallas."

Their attention was now drawn from the goddess of wisdom to a mad Edgar, who so vehemently ran about the room calling out "Poor Tom's a cold!" that, in a short time, he was obliged to take off his mask from an effect, not very delicate, of the heat!

Soon after, a gentleman desiring some lemonade, whose

toga spoke the consular dignity, though his broken English betrayed a native of France, the school-master followed him, and, with reverence the most profound, began to address him in Latin; but, turning quick towards him, he gaily said, "*Monsieur, j'ai l'honneur de representer Ciceron, le grand Ciceron, pere de sa patrie! mais quoique j'ai cet honneur là, je ne suis pas pedant!——mon dieu, Monsieur, je ne parle que le Français dans la bonne compagnie!*" And, politely bowing, he went on.

Just then Cecilia, while looking about the room for Mrs. Harrel, felt herself suddenly pinched by the cheek, and hastily turning round, perceived again her friend the chimney-sweeper, who, laughing, cried, "Only me! don't be frightened. Have something to tell you;—had no luck! got never a husband yet! can't find one! looked all over, too; sharp as a needle. Not one to be had! all catched up!"[1]

"I am glad to hear it, sir," said Cecilia, somewhat vexed by observing the white domino attentively listening; "and I hope, therefore, you will give yourself no further trouble."

"Pretty duck!" cried he, chucking her under the chin; "never mind, don't be cast down; get one at last. Leave it to me. Nothing under a plum; won't take up with less. Good-by, ducky, good-by! must go home now,—begin to be nodding."

And then, repeating his kind caresses, he walked away.

"Do you think, then," said the white domino, "more highly of Mr. Briggs for discernment and taste than of any body?"

"I hope not!" answered she, "for low indeed should I then think of the rest of the world!"

[1] "The character," cried she (Mrs. Walsingham), "which I most delight in, is Mr. Briggs. I think it the most admirable and entertaining in the book." "I am very glad to hear it, ma'am, for he has few friends." "Oh, I know many people think him too low, but that is merely from choosing only to look in the upper circle. Now, I am not at all surprised to find that the Queen objects to him;—a foreigner, and in so exalted a station, may well not understand so vulgar a miser; but why people in common life should object to what in common life is to be found, I don't understand." . . . You will easily believe I was by no means sorry for the Queen's objection, as I was glad and surprised her Majesty should ever have met with the book."—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, p. 208, vol. ii.

"The commission with which he is charged," returned the domino, "has then misled me; I imagined discernment and taste might be necessary ingredients for making such a choice as your approbation would sanctify; but perhaps his skill in guarding against any fraud or deduction in the stipulation he mentioned, may be all that is requisite for the execution of his trust."

"I understand very well," said Cecilia, a little hurt, "the severity of your meaning; and if Mr. Briggs had any commission but of his own suggestion, it would fill me with shame and confusion; but as that is not the case, those, at least, are sensations which it cannot give me."

"My meaning," cried the domino, with some earnestness, "should I express it seriously, would but prove to you the respect and admiration with which you have inspired me; and if indeed, as Mr. Briggs hinted, such a prize is to be purchased by riches, I know not, from what I have seen of its merit, any sum I should think adequate to its value."

"You are determined, I see," said Cecilia, smiling, "to make most liberal amends for your asperity.

A loud clack of tongues now interrupted their discourse; and the domino, at the desire of Cecilia, for whom he had procured a seat, went forward to enquire what was the matter. But scarce had he given up his place a moment, before, to her great mortification, it was occupied by the fiend.

Again, but with the same determined silence he had hitherto preserved, he made signs of obedience and homage, and her perplexity to conjecture who he could be, or what were his motives for this persecution, became the more urgent as they seemed the less likely to be satisfied. But the fiend, who was no other than Mr. Monckton, had every instant less encouragement to make himself known: his plan had in nothing succeeded, and his provocation at its failure had caused him the bitterest disappointment; he had intended, in the character of a tormentor, not only to pursue and hover around her himself, but he had also hoped, in the same character, to have kept at a distance all other admirers: but the violence with which he had over-acted his part, by raising her disgust and the indignation of the company, rendered his views wholly abortive: while

the consciousness of an extravagance for which, if discovered, he could assign no reason not liable to excite suspicions of his secret motives, reduced him to guarding a painful and most irksome silence the whole evening. And Cecilia, to whose unsuspicious mind the idea of Mr. Monckton had never occurred, added continually to the cruelty of his situation, by an undisguised aversion to his assiduity, as well as by a manifest preference to the attendance of the white domino. All, therefore, that his disappointed scheme now left in his power, was to watch her motions, listen to her discourse, and inflict occasionally upon others some part of the chagrin with which he was tormented himself.

While they were in this situation, Harlequin, in consequence of being ridiculed by the Turk for want of agility, offered to jump over the new dessert table, and desired to have a little space cleared to give room to his motions. It was in vain the people who distributed the refreshments, and who were placed at the other side of the table, expostulated upon the danger of the experiment; Morrice had a rage of enterprise untameable, and therefore, first taking a run, he attempted the leap.

The consequence was such as might naturally be expected; he could not accomplish his purpose, but, finding himself falling, imprudently caught hold of the lately erected awning, and pulled it entirely upon his own head, and with it the new contrived lights, which in various forms were fixed to it, and which all came down together.

The mischief and confusion occasioned by this exploit were very alarming, and almost dangerous; those who were near the table suffered most by the crush, but splinters of the glass flew yet further; and as the room, which was small, had been only lighted up by lamps hanging from the awning, it was now in total darkness, except close to the door, which was still illuminated from the adjoining apartments.

The clamour of Harlequin, who was covered with glass, papier machée, lamps, and oil, the screams of the ladies, the universal buzz of tongues, and the struggle between the frighted crowd which was enclosed, to get out, and the curious crowd from the other apartments, to get in, occa-

sioned a disturbance and tumult equally noisy and confused. But the most serious sufferer was the unfortunate fiend, who being nearer the table than Cecilia, was so pressed upon by the numbers which poured from it, that he found a separation unavoidable, and was unable, from the darkness and the throng, to discover whether she was still in the same place, or had made her escape into another.

She had, however, encountered the white domino, and, under his protection, was safely conveyed to a further part of the room. Her intention and desire were to quit it immediately, but at the remonstrance of her conductor, she consented to remain some time longer. "The conflict at the door," said he, "will quite overpower you. Stay here but a few minutes, and both parties will have struggled themselves tired, and you may then go without difficulty. Meantime, can you not, by this faint light, suppose me one of your guardians, Mr. Briggs, for example, or, if he is too old for me, Mr. Harrel, and entrust yourself to my care?"

"You seem wonderfully well acquainted with my guardians," said Cecilia; "I cannot imagine how you have had your intelligence."

"Nor can I," answered the domino, "imagine how Mr. Briggs became so particularly your favourite as to be entrusted with powers to dispose of you."

"You are mistaken indeed; he is entrusted with no powers but such as his own fancy has suggested."

"But how has Mr. Delvile offended you, that with him only you seem to have no commerce or communication?"

"Mr. Delvile!" repeated Cecilia, still more surprised, "are you also acquainted with Mr. Delvile?"

"He is certainly a man of fashion," continued the domino, "and he is also a man of honour; surely, then, he would be more pleasant for confidence and consultation, than one whose only notion of happiness is money, whose only idea of excellence is avarice, and whose only conception of sense is distrust!"

Here a violent outcry again interrupted their conversation; but not till Cecilia had satisfied her doubts concerning the white domino, by conjecturing he was Mr. Belfield, who might easily, at the house of Mr. Monckton, have

gathered the little circumstances of her situation to which he alluded, and whose size and figure exactly resembled those of her new acquaintance.

The author of the former disturbance was now the occasion of the present: the fiend, having vainly traversed the room in search of Cecilia, stumbled accidentally upon Harlequin, before he was freed from the relics of his own mischief; and unable to resist the temptation of opportunity, and the impulse of revenge, he gave vent to the wrath so often excited by the blunders, forwardness, and tricks of Morrice, and inflicted upon him, with his own wooden sword, which he seized for that purpose, a chastisement the most serious and severe.

Poor Harlequin, unable to imagine any reason for this violent attack, and already cut with the glass, and bruised with the fall, spared not his lungs in making known his disapprobation of such treatment: but the fiend, regardless either of his complaints or his resistance, forbore not to belabour him till compelled by the entrance of people with lights. And then, after artfully playing sundry antics, under pretence of still supporting his character, with a motion too sudden for prevention, and too rapid for pursuit, he escaped out of the room, and hurrying down stairs, threw himself into a hackney chair, which conveyed him to a place where he privately changed his dress before he returned home: bitterly repenting the experiment he had made, and conscious, too late, that had he appeared in a character he might have avowed, he could, without impropriety, have attended Cecilia the whole evening. But such is deservedly the frequent fate of cunning, which, while it plots surprise and detection of others, commonly overshoots its mark, and ends in its own disgrace.

The introduction of the lights now making manifest the confusion which the frolic of Harlequin had occasioned, he was seized with such a dread of the resentment of Mr. Harrel, that, forgetting blows, bruises, and wounds, not one of which were so frightful to him as reproof, he made the last exhibition of his agility by an abrupt and hasty retreat.

He had, however, no reason for apprehension, since in every thing that regarded expense, Mr. Harrel had no feeling, and his lady had no thought.

The rooms now began to empty very fast, but among the few masks yet remaining, Cecilia again perceived Don Quixote; and while, in conjunction with the white domino, she was allowing him the praise of having supported his character with more uniform propriety than any other person in the assembly, she observed him taking off his mask for the convenience of drinking some lemonade, and, looking in his face, found he was no other than Mr. Belfield! Much astonished, and more than ever perplexed, she again turned to the white domino, who seeing in her countenance a surprise of which he knew not the reason, said, half laughing, "You think, perhaps, I shall never be gone? And indeed I am almost of the same opinion: but what can I do? Instead of growing weary by the length of my stay, my reluctance to shorten it encreases with its duration; and all the methods I take, whether by speaking to you or looking at you, with a view to be satiated, only double my eagerness for looking and listening again! I must go, however; and if I am happy, I may perhaps meet with you again,—though, if I am wise, I shall never seek you more!"

And then, with the last stragglers that reluctantly disappeared, he made his exit; leaving Cecilia greatly pleased with his conversation and his manners, but extremely perplexed to account for his knowledge of her affairs and situation.

The school-master had already been gone some time.

She was now earnestly pressed by the Harrels and Sir Robert, who still remained, to send to a warehouse for a dress, and accompany them to the Pantheon; but though she was not without some inclination to comply, in the hope of further prolonging the entertainment of an evening from which she had received much pleasure, she disliked the attendance of the Baronet, and felt averse to grant any request that he could make, and therefore she begged they would excuse her; and having waited to see their dresses, which were very superb, she retired to her own apartment.

A great variety of conjecture upon all that had passed, now, and till the moment that she sunk to rest, occupied her mind; the extraordinary persecution of the fiend ex-

cited at once her curiosity and amazement, while the knowledge of her affairs shown by the white domino, surprised her not less, and interested her more.

CHAPTER IV.

AN AFFRAY.

THE next morning, during breakfast, Cecilia was informed that a gentleman desired to speak with her. She begged permission of Mrs. Harrel to have him asked up stairs, and was not a little surprised when he proved to be the same old gentleman whose singular exclamations had so much struck her at Mr. Monckton's, and at the rehearsal of Artaserse.

Abruptly, and with a stern aspect advancing to her, "You are rich," he cried; "are you therefore worthless?"

"I hope not!" answered she, in some consternation; while Mrs. Harrel, believing his intention was to rob them, ran precipitately to the bell, which she rang without ceasing till two or three servants hastened into the room: by which time, being less alarmed, she only made signs to them to stay, and stood quietly herself to wait what would follow.

The old man, without attending to her, continued his dialogue with Cecilia.

"Know you then," he said, "a blameless use of riches? such a use as not only in the broad glare of day shall shine resplendent, but in the darkness of midnight, and stillness of repose, shall give you reflections unimbittered, and slumbers unbroken? tell me, know you this use?"

"Not so well, perhaps," answered she, "as I ought; but I am very willing to learn better."

"Begin, then, while yet youth and inexperience, new to the callousness of power and affluence, leave something good to work upon; yesterday you saw the extravagance of luxury and folly; to-day look deeper, and see, and learn to pity the misery of disease and penury."

He then put into her hand a paper, which contained a

most affecting account of the misery to which a poor and wretched family had been reduced, by sickness, and various other misfortunes.

Cecilia, "open as day to melting charity," having hastily perused it, took out her purse, and, offering to him three guineas, said, "You must direct me, sir, what to give, if this is insufficient."

"Hast thou so much heart?" cried he, with emotion, "and has fortune, though it has cursed thee with the temptation of prosperity, not yet rooted from thy mind its native benevolence? I return in part thy liberal contribution; this," taking one guinea, "doubles my expectations; I will not, by making thy charity distress thee, accelerate the fatal hour of hardness and degeneracy."

He was then going; but Cecilia, following him, said, "No, take it all! Who should assist the poor if I will not? Rich, without connections; powerful, without wants; upon whom have they any claim if not upon me?"

"True," cried he, receiving the rest; "and wise as true. Give, therefore, whilst yet thou hast the heart to give, and make, in thy days of innocence and kindness, some interest with Heaven and the poor!"

And then he disappeared.

"Why, my dear," cried Mrs. Harrel, "what could induce you to give the man so much money? Don't you see he is crazy? I dare say he would have been just as well contented with sixpence."

"I know not what he is," said Cecilia, "but his manners are not more singular than his sentiments are affecting; and if he is actuated by charity to raise subscriptions for the indigent, he can surely apply to no one who ought so readily to contribute as myself."

Mr. Harrel then came in, and his lady most eagerly told him the transaction.

"Scandalous!" he exclaimed; "why this is no better than being a house-breaker! Pray give orders never to admit him again. Three guineas! I never heard so impudent a thing in my life! Indeed, Miss Beverley, you must be more discreet in future, you will else be ruined before you know where you are."

"Thus it is," said Cecilia, half smiling, "that we can all

lecture one another! to-day you recommend economy to me; yesterday I with difficulty forbore recommending it to you."

"Nay," answered he, "that was quite another matter; expense incurred in the common way of a man's living is quite another thing to an extortion of this sort."

"It is another thing, indeed," said she, "but I know not that it is therefore a better."

Mr. Harrel made no answer: and Cecilia, privately moralizing upon the different estimates of expense and economy made by the dissipated and the charitable, soon retired to her own apartment, determined firmly to adhere to her lately adopted plan, and hoping, by the assistance of her new and very singular monitor, to extend her practice of doing good, by enlarging her knowledge of distress.

Objects are, however, never wanting for the exercise of benevolence; report soon published her liberality, and those who wished to believe it, failed not to enquire into its truth. She was soon at the head of a little band of pensioners, and, never satisfied with the generosity of her donations, found, in a very short time, that the common allowance of her guardians was scarce adequate to the calls of her munificence.

And thus, in acts of goodness and charity, passed undisturbed another week of the life of Cecilia: but when the fervour of self-approbation lost its novelty, the pleasure with which her new plan was begun first subsided into tranquillity, and then sunk into languor. To a heart formed for friendship and affection the charms of solitude are very short-lived; and though she had sickened of the turbulence of perpetual company, she now wearied of passing all her time by herself, and sighed for the comfort of society, and the relief of communication. But she saw with astonishment the difficulty with which this was to be obtained: the endless succession of diversions, the continual rotation of assemblies, the numerousness of splendid engagements, of which while every one complained, every one was proud to boast, so effectually impeded private meetings and friendly intercourse, that, whichever way she turned herself, all commerce seemed impracticable, but such as either led to dissipation, or accidentally flowed from it.

Yet finding the error into which her ardour of reformation had hurried her, and that a rigid seclusion from company was productive of a lassitude as little favourable to active virtue as dissipation itself, she resolved to soften her plan, and by mingling amusement with benevolence, to try, at least, to approach that golden mean, which, like the philosopher's stone, always eludes our grasp, yet always invites our wishes.

For this purpose she desired to attend Mrs. Harrel to the next opera that should be represented.

The following Saturday, therefore, she accompanied that lady and Mrs. Mears to the Haymarket, escorted by Mr. Arnott.

They were very late; the opera was begun, and even in the lobby the crowd was so great that their passage was obstructed. Here they were presently accosted by Miss Larolles, who, running up to Cecilia and taking her hand, said, "Lord, you can't conceive how glad I am to see you! why, my dear creature, where have you hid yourself these twenty ages? You are quite in luck in coming to-night, I assure you; it's the best opera we have had this season: there's such a monstrous crowd there's no stirring. We sha'n't get in this half hour. The coffee-room is quite full; only come and see; is it not delightful?"

This intimation was sufficient for Mrs. Harrel, whose love of the opera was merely a love of company, fashion, and show; and therefore to the coffee-room she readily led the way.

And here Cecilia found rather the appearance of a brilliant assembly of ladies and gentlemen, collected merely to see and to entertain one another, than of distinct and casual parties, mixing solely from necessity, and waiting only for room to enter a theatre.

The first person that addressed them was Captain Aresby, who, with his usual delicate languishment, smiled upon Cecilia, and softly whispering, "How divinely you look to night!" proceeded to pay his compliments to some other ladies.

"Do pray now," cried Miss Larolles, "observe Mr. Meadows! only just see where he has fixed himself! in the very best place in the room, and keeping the fire from every-

body! I do assure you that's always his way, and it's monstrous provoking, for if one's ever so cold, he lollops so, that one's quite starved. But you must know there's another thing he does that is quite as bad, for if he gets a seat, he never offers to move, if he sees one sinking with fatigue. And besides, if one is waiting for one's carriage two hours together, he makes it a rule never to stir a step to see for it. Only think how monstrous!"

"These are heavy complaints, indeed," said Cecilia, looking at him attentively; "I should have expected from his appearance a very different account of his gallantry, for he seems dressed with more studied elegance than any-body here."

"O, yes," cried Miss Larolles, "he is the sweetest dresser in the world: he has the most delightful taste you can conceive, nobody has half so good a fancy. I assure you it's a great thing to be spoke to by him: we are all of us quite angry when he won't take any notice of us."

"Is your anger," said Cecilia, laughing, "in honour of himself or of his coat?"

"Why, Lord, don't you know all this time that he is an *ennuyé?*"

"I know, at least," answered Cecilia, "that he would soon make one of me."

"O, but one is never affronted with an *ennuyé*, if he is ever so provoking, because one always knows what it means."

"Is he agreeable?"

"Why, to tell you the truth,—but pray now don't mention it,—I think him most excessive disagreeable! He yawns in one's face every time one looks at him. I assure you sometimes I expect to see him fall fast asleep while I am talking to him, for he is so immensely absent he don't hear one half that one says; only conceive how horrid!"

"But why, then, do you encourage him? why do you take any notice of him?"

"O, everybody does, I assure you, else I would not for the world; but he is so courted you have no idea. However, of all things let me advise you never to dance with him; I did once myself, and I declare I was quite distressed to death the whole time, for he was taken with such a fit of

absence he knew nothing he was about, sometimes skipping and jumping with all the violence in the world, just as if he only danced for exercise, and sometimes standing quite still, or lolling against the wainscoat and gaping, and taking no more notice of me than if he had never seen me in his life!"

The Captain now, again advancing to Cecilia, said, "So you would not do us the honour to try the masquerade at the Pantheon? however, I hear you had a very brilliant spectacle at Mr. Harrel's. I was quite *au desespoir* that I could not have the honour of sliding in; I did *mon possible*, but it was quite beyond me."

Cecilia now, growing very impatient to hear the opera, begged to know if they might not make a trial to get into the pit?

"I fear," said the Captain, smiling as they passed him, without offering any assistance, "you will find it extreme petrifying; for my part, I confess I am not upon the principle of crowding."

The ladies, however, accompanied by Mr. Arnott, made the attempt, and soon found, according to the custom of report, that the difficulty, for the pleasure of talking of it, had been considerably exaggerated. They were separated, indeed, but their accommodation was tolerably good.

Cecilia was much vexed to find the first act of the opera almost over; but she was soon still more dissatisfied when she discovered that she had no chance of hearing the little which remained: the place she had happened to find vacant was next to a party of young ladies, who were so earnestly engaged in their own discourse, that they listened not to a note of the opera, and so infinitely diverted with their own witticisms, that their tittering and loquacity allowed no one in their vicinity to hear better than themselves. Cecilia tried in vain to confine her attention to the singers, she was distant from the stage, and to them she was near, and her fruitless attempts all ended in chagrin and impatience.

At length she resolved to make an effort for entertainment in another way, and since the expectations which brought her to the opera were destroyed, to try, by listening to her fair neighbours, whether those who occasioned her disappointment could make her any amends.

For this purpose she turned to them wholly; yet was at first in no little perplexity to understand what was going forward, since so universal was the eagerness for talking, and so insurmountable the antipathy to listening, that every one seemed to have her wishes bounded by a continual utterance of words, without waiting for any answer, or scarce even desiring to be heard.

But when, somewhat more used to their dialect and manner, she began better to comprehend their discourse. Wretchedly indeed did it supply to her the loss of the opera. She heard nothing but descriptions of trimmings, and complaints of hair-dressers, hints of conquest that teemed with vanity, and histories of engagements which were inflated with exultation.

At the end of the act, by the crowding forward of the gentlemen to see the dance, Mrs. Harrel had an opportunity of making room for her by herself, and she had then some reason to expect hearing the rest of the opera in peace, for the company before her, consisting entirely of young men, seemed, even during the dance, fearful of speaking, lest their attention should be drawn for a moment from the stage.

But to her infinite surprise, no sooner was the second act begun, than their attention ended! they turned from the performers to each other, and entered into a whispering, but gay conversation, which though not loud enough to disturb the audience in general, kept in the ears of their neighbours a buzzing which interrupted all pleasure from the representation. Of this effect of their gaiety it seemed uncertain whether they were conscious, but very evident that they were careless.

The desperate resource which she had tried during the first act, of seeking entertainment from the very conversation which prevented her enjoying it, was not now even in her power: for these gentlemen, though as negligent as the young ladies had been whom they disturbed, were much more cautious whom they instructed: their language was ambiguous, and their terms, to Cecilia, were unintelligible: their subjects, indeed, required some discretion, being nothing less than a ludicrous calculation of the age and duration of jointured widows, and of the chances and expectations of unmarried young ladies.

But what more even than their talking provoked her, was finding that the moment the act was over, when she cared not if their vociferation had been incessant, one of them called out, "Come, be quiet, the dance is begun;" and then they were again all silent attention!

In the third act, however, she was more fortunate; the gentlemen again changed their places, and they were succeeded by others who came to the Opera not to hear themselves but the performers: and as soon as she was permitted to listen, the voice of Pacchierotti took from her all desire to hear any thing but itself.

During the last dance she was discovered by Sir Robert Floyer, who, sauntering down Fops'-alley, stationed himself by her side, and whenever the *figurante* relieved the principal dancers, turned his eyes from the stage to her face, as better worth his notice, and equally destined for his amusement.

Mr. Monckton too, who for some time had seen and watched her, now approached; he had observed with much satisfaction that her whole mind had been intent upon the performance, yet still the familiarity of Sir Robert Floyer's admiration disturbed and perplexed him; he determined, therefore, to make an effort to satisfy his doubts by examining into his intentions; and, taking him apart, before the dance was quite over, "Well," he said, "who is so handsome here as Harrel's ward?"

"Yes," answered he, calmly, "she is handsome, but I don't like her expression."

"No? why, what is the fault of it?"

"Proud, cursed proud. It is not the sort of woman I like. If one says a civil thing to her, she only wishes one at the devil for one's pains."

"O, you have tried her, then, have you? why you are not, in general, much given to say civil things."

"Yes, you know I said something of that sort to her once about Juliet, at the rehearsal. Were not you by?"

"What, then, was that all? and did you imagine one compliment would do your business with her?"

"O, hang it, who ever dreams of complimenting the women now? that's all at an end."

"You won't find she thinks so, though; for, as you well

say, her pride is insufferable; and I, who have long known her, can assure you it does not diminish upon intimacy."

"Perhaps not,—but there's very pretty picking in £3,000 per annum! one would not think much of a little incumbrance upon such an estate."

"Are you quite sure the estate is so considerable? Report is mightily given to magnify."

"O, I have pretty good intelligence: though, after all, I don't know but I may be off; she'll take a confounded deal of time and trouble."

Monckton, too much a man of interest and of the world to cherish that delicacy which covets universal admiration for the object of its fondness, then artfully enlarged upon the obstacles he already apprehended, and insinuated such others as he believed would be most likely to intimidate him. But his subtlety was lost upon the impenetrable Baronet, who possessed that hard insensibility which obstinately pursues its own course, deaf to what is said, and indifferent to what is thought.

Meanwhile the ladies were now making way to the coffee-room, though very slowly on account of the crowd; and just as they got near the lobby, Cecilia perceived Mr. Belfield, who, immediately making himself known to her, was offering his service to hand her out of the pit, when Sir Robert Floyer, not seeing, or not heeding, him, pressed forward, and said, "Will you let me have the honour, Miss Beverley, of taking care of you?"

Cecilia, to whom he grew daily more disagreeable, coldly declined his assistance, while she readily accepted that which had first been offered her by Mr. Belfield.

The haughty Baronet, extremely nettled, forced his way on, and rudely stalking up to Mr. Belfield, motioned with his hand for room to pass him, and said, "Make way, sir!"

"Make way for *me*, sir!" cried Belfield, opposing him with one hand, while with the other he held Cecilia.

"You, sir? and who are you, sir?" demanded the Baronet, disdainfully.

"Of that, sir, I shall give you an account whenever you please," answered Belfield, with equal scorn.

"What the devil do you mean, sir?"

"Nothing very difficult to be understood," replied Belfield, and attempted to draw on Cecilia, who, much alarmed, was shrinking back.

Sir Robert then, swelling with rage, reproachfully turned to her, and said, "Will you suffer such an impertinent fellow as that, Miss Beverley, to have the honour of taking your hand?"

Belfield, with great indignation, demanded what he meant by the term impertinent fellow; and Sir Robert, yet more insolently repeated it. Cecilia, extremely shocked, earnestly besought them both to be quiet; but Belfield, at the repetition of this insult, hastily let go her hand and put his own upon his sword, while Sir Robert, taking advantage of his situation in being a step higher than his antagonist, fiercely pushed him back, and descended into the lobby.

Belfield, enraged beyond endurance, instantly drew his sword, and Sir Robert was preparing to follow his example, when Cecilia, in an agony of fright, called out, "Good heaven! will nobody interfere?" And then a young man, forcing his way through the crowd, exclaimed, "For shame, for shame, gentlemen! is this a place for such violence!"

Belfield, endeavouring to recover himself, put up his sword, and though in a voice half choked with passion, said, "I thank you, sir! I was off my guard. I beg pardon of the whole company."

Then, walking up to Sir Robert, he put into his hand a card with his name and direction, saying, "With you, sir, I shall be happy to settle what apologies are necessary at your first leisure;" and hurried away.

Sir Robert, exclaiming aloud that he should soon teach him to whom he had been so impertinent, was immediately going to follow him, when the affrighted Cecilia again called out aloud, "Oh, stop him!—good God! will nobody stop him!"—

The rapidity with which this angry scene had passed had filled her with amazement, and the evident resentment of the Baronet upon her refusing his assistance, gave her an immediate consciousness that she was herself the real cause of the quarrel; while the manner in which he was pre-

paring to follow Mr. Belfield, convinced her of the desperate scene which was likely to succeed; fear, therefore, overcoming every other feeling, forced from her this exclamation before she knew what she said.

The moment she had spoken, the young man who had already interposed again rushed forward, and seizing Sir Robert by the arm, warmly remonstrated against the violence of his proceedings, and being presently seconded by other gentlemen, almost compelled him to give up his design.

Then, hastening to Cecilia, "Be not alarmed, madam," he cried, "all is over, and everybody is safe."

Cecilia, finding herself thus addressed by a gentleman she had never before seen, felt extremely ashamed of having rendered her interest in the debate so apparent; she curtsied to him in some confusion, and taking hold of Mrs. Harrel's arm, hurried her back into the pit, in order to quit a crowd of which she now found herself the principal object.

Curiosity, however, was universally excited, and her retreat served but to inflame it: some of the ladies, and most of the gentlemen, upon various pretences, returned into the pit merely to look at her, and in a few minutes the report was current that the young lady who had been the occasion of the quarrel was dying with love for Sir Robert Floyer.

Mr. Monckton, who had kept by her side during the whole affair, felt thunder-struck by the emotion she had shown; Mr. Arnott too, who had never quitted her, wished himself exposed to the same danger as Sir Robert, so that he might be honoured with the same concern; but they were both too much the dupes of their own apprehensions and jealousy, to perceive that what they instantly imputed to fondness, proceeded simply from general humanity, accidentally united with the consciousness of being accessary to the quarrel.

The young stranger who had officiated as mediator between the disputants, in a few moments followed her with a glass of water, which he had brought from the coffee-room, begging her to drink it and compose herself.

Cecilia, though she declined his civility with more vexa-

tion than gratitude, perceived, as she raised her eyes to thank him, that her new friend was a young man very strikingly elegant in his address and appearance.

Miss Larolles next, who, with her party, came back into the pit, ran up to Cecilia, crying, "O, my dear creature, what a monstrous shocking thing! You've no idea how I am frightened; do you know I happened to be quite at the further end of the coffee-room when it began, and I could not get out to see what was the matter for ten ages; only conceive what a situation!"

"Would your fright, then, have been less," said Cecilia, "had you been nearer the danger?"

"O Lord, no, for when I came within sight I was fifty times worse! I gave such a monstrous scream, that it quite made Mr. Meadows start. I dare say he'll tell me of it these hundred years: but really when I saw them draw their swords I thought I should have died; I was so amazingly surprised you've no notion."

Here she was interrupted by the re-appearance of the active stranger, who again advancing to Cecilia, said, "I am in doubt whether the efforts I make to revive will please or irritate you, but though you rejected the last cordial I ventured to present you, perhaps you will look with a more favourable eye towards that of which I am now the herald."

Cecilia then, casting her eyes around, saw that he was followed by Sir Robert Floyer. Full of displeasure both at this introduction and at his presence, she turned hastily to Mr. Arnott, and entreated him to enquire if the carriage was not yet ready.

Sir Robert, looking at her with all the exultation of new-raised vanity, said, with more softness than he had ever before addressed her, "Have you been frightened?"

"Everybody, I believe, was frightened," answered Cecilia, with an air of dignity intended to check his rising expectations.

"There was no sort of cause," answered he: "the fellow did not know whom he spoke to, that was all."

"Lord, Sir Robert," cried Miss Larolles, "how could you be so shocking as to draw your sword? you can't conceive how horrid it looked."

"Why I did not draw my sword," cried he, "I only had my hand on the hilt."

"Lord, did not you, indeed! well, everybody said you did, and I'm sure I thought I saw five-and-twenty swords all at once. I thought one of you would be killed every moment. It was horrid disagreeable, I assure you."

Sir Robert was now called away by some gentlemen; and Mr. Monckton, earnest to be better informed of Cecilia's real sentiments, said, with affected concern, "At present this matter is merely ridiculous; I am sorry to think in how short a time it may become more important."

"Surely," cried Cecilia, with quickness, "some of their friends will interfere! surely upon so trifling a subject they will not be so mad, so inexcusable, as to proceed to more serious resentment!"

"Whichever of them," said the stranger, "is most honoured by this anxiety, will be mad indeed to risk a life so valued!"

"Cannot you, Mr. Monckton," continued Cecilia, too much alarmed to regard this insinuation, "speak with Mr. Belfield? You are acquainted with him, I know: is it impossible you can follow him?"

"I will with pleasure do whatever you wish; but still if Sir Robert—"

"O, as to Sir Robert, Mr. Harrel, I am very sure, will undertake him; I will try to see him to-night myself, and entreat him to exert all his influence."

"Ah, madam," cried the stranger, archly, and lowering his voice, "those *French beads* and *Bristol stones* have not, I find, shone in vain!"

At these words Cecilia recognized her white domino acquaintance at the masquerade; she had before recollected his voice, but was too much perturbed to consider where or when she had heard it.

"If Mr. Briggs," continued he, "does not speedily come forth with his plum friend, before the glittering of swords and spears is joined to that of jewels, the glare will be so resplendent, that he will fear to come within the influence of its rays. Though, perhaps, he may only think the stronger the light, the better he shall see to count his guineas: for as

"—in ten thousand pounds
Ten thousand charms are centred,"

in a hundred thousand, the charms may have such magic power, that he may defy the united efforts of tinsel and knight errantry to deliver you from the golden spell."

Here the Captain, advancing to Cecilia, said, "I have been looking for you in vain *partout*, but the crowd has been so *accablant* I was almost reduced to despair. Give me leave to hope you are now recovered from the *horreur* of this little *fracas?*"

Mr. Arnott then brought intelligence that the carriage was ready. Cecilia, glad to be gone, instantly hastened to it; and, as she was conducted by Mr. Monckton, most earnestly entreated him to take an active part in endeavouring to prevent the fatal consequences with which the quarrel seemed likely to terminate.

CHAPTER V.

A FASHIONABLE FRIEND.

AS soon as they returned home, Cecilia begged Mrs. Harrel not to lose a moment before she tried to acquaint Mr. Harrel with the state of the affair. But that lady was too helpless to know in what manner to set about it; she could not tell where he was, she could not conjecture where he might be.

Cecilia then rang for his own man, and upon enquiry, heard that he was, in all probability, at Brookes's in St. James's Street.

She then begged Mrs. Harrel would write to him. Mrs. Harrel knew not what to say.

Cecilia, therefore, equally quick in forming and executing her designs, wrote to him herself, and entreated that, without losing an instant, he would find out his friend Sir Robert Floyer, and endeavour to effect an accommodation between him and Mr. Belfield, with whom he had had a dispute at the Opera-house.

The man soon returned with an answer that Mr. Harrel would not fail to obey her commands.

She determined to sit up till he came home, in order to learn the event of the negociation. She considered herself as the efficient cause of the quarrel, yet scarce knew how or in what to blame herself; the behaviour of Sir Robert had always been offensive to her; she disliked his manners, and detested his boldness; and she had already shown her intention to accept the assistance of Mr. Belfield before he had followed her with an offer of his own. She was uncertain, indeed, whether he had remarked what had passed, but she had reason to think that, so circumstanced, to have changed her purpose would have been construed into an encouragement that might have authorised his future presumption of her favour. All she could find to regret with regard to herself, was wanting the presence of mind to have refused the civilities of both.

Mrs. Harrel, though really sorry at the state of the affair, regarded herself as so entirely unconcerned in it, that, easily wearied when out of company, she soon grew sleepy, and retired to her own room.

The anxious Cecilia, hoping every instant the return of Mr. Harrel, sat up by herself: but it was not till near four o'clock in the morning that he made his appearance.

"Well, sir," cried she, the moment she saw him, "I fear by your coming home so late you have had much trouble, but I hope it has been successful?"

Great, however, was her mortification when he answered that he had not even seen the Baronet, having been engaged himself in so particular a manner, that he could not possibly break from his party till past three o'clock, at which time he drove to the house of Sir Robert, but heard that he was not yet come home.

Cecilia, though much disgusted by such a specimen of insensibility towards a man whom he pretended to call his friend, would not leave him till he had promised to arise as soon as it was light, and make an effort to recover the time lost.

She was now no longer surprised either at the debts of Mr. Harrel, or at his *particular occasions* for money. She was convinced he spent half the night in gaming, and the consequences, however dreadful, were but natural. That Sir Robert Floyer also did the same was a matter of much less

importance to her, but that the life of any man should through her means be endangered, disturbed her inexpressibly.

She went, however, to bed, but arose again at six o'clock, and dressed herself by candle light. In an hour's time she sent to enquire if Mr. Harrel was stirring, and hearing he was asleep, gave orders to have him called. Yet he did not rise till eight o'clock, nor could all her messages or expostulations drive him out of the house till nine.

He was scarcely gone before Mr. Monckton arrived, who now for the first time had the satisfaction of finding her alone.

"You are very good for coming so early," cried she; "have you seen Mr. Belfield? Have you had any conversation with him?"

Alarmed at her eagerness, and still more at seeing by her looks the sleepless night she had passed, he made at first no reply; and when, with increasing impatience, she repeated her question, he only said, "Has Belfield ever visited you since he had the honour of meeting you at my house?"

"No, never."

"Have you seen him often in public?"

"No, I have never seen him at all but the evening Mrs. Harrel received masks, and last night at the opera."

"Is it then for the safety of Sir Robert you are so extremely anxious?"

"It is for the safety of both; the cause of their quarrel was so trifling, that I cannot bear to think its consequence should be serious."

"But do you not wish better to one of them than to the other?"

"As a matter of justice I do, but not from any partiality: Sir Robert was undoubtedly the aggressor, and Mr. Belfield, though at first too fiery, was certainly ill used."

The candour of this speech recovered Mr. Monckton from his apprehensions; and carefully observing her looks while he spoke, he gave her the following account.

That he had hastened to Belfield's lodgings the moment he had left the Opera-house, and, after repeated denials, absolutely forced himself into his room, where he was quite alone, and in much agitation: he conversed with him for more than an hour upon the subject of the quarrel, but found

he so warmly resented the personal insult given him by Sir Robert, that no remonstrance had any effect in making him alter his resolution of demanding satisfaction.

"And could you bring him to consent to no compromise before you left him?" cried Cecilia.

"No; for before I got to him—the challenge had been sent."

"The challenge! good heaven!—and do you know the event?"

"I called again this morning at his lodgings, but he was not returned home."

"And was it impossible to follow him? Were there no means to discover whither he was gone?"

"None; to elude all pursuit, he went out before anybody in the house was stirring, and took his servant with him."

"Have you then been to Sir Robert?"

"I have been to Cavendish-square, but there, it seems, he has not appeared all night; I traced him, through his servants, from the Opera to a gaming-house, where I found he had amused himself till this morning."

The uneasiness of Cecilia now encreased every moment; and Mr. Monckton, seeing he had no other chance of satisfying her, offered his service to go again in search of both the gentlemen, and endeavour to bring her better information. She accepted the proposal with gratitude, and he departed.

Soon after, she was joined by Mr. Arnott, who, though seized with all the horrors of jealousy at sight of her apprehensions, was so desirous to relieve them, that without even making any merit of obliging her, he almost instantly set out upon the same errand that employed Mr. Monckton, and determined not to mention his design till he found whether it would enable him to bring her good tidings.

He was scarce gone when she was told that Mr. Delvile begged to have the honour of speaking to her. Surprised at this condescension, she desired he might immediately be admitted; but much was her surprise augmented, when, instead of seeing her ostentatious guardian, she again beheld her masquerade friend, the white domino.

He intreated her pardon for an intrusion neither authorized by acquaintance nor by business, though somewhat,

he hoped, palliated, by his near connection with one who was privileged to take an interest in her affairs: and then, hastening to the motives which had occasioned his visit, "when I had the honour," he said, "of seeing you last night at the Opera-house, the dispute which had just happened between two gentlemen, seemed to give you an uneasiness which could not but be painful to all who observed it, and as among that number I was not the least moved, you will forgive, I hope, my eagerness to be the first to bring you intelligence that nothing fatal has happened, or is likely to happen."

"You do me, sir," said Cecilia, "much honour; and indeed you relieve me from a suspense extremely disagreeable. The accommodation, I suppose, was brought about this morning?"

"I find," answered he, smiling, "you now expect too much; but hope is never so elastic as when it springs from the ruins of terror."

"What then is the matter? Are they, at last, not safe?"

"Yes, perfectly safe; but I cannot tell you they have never been in danger."

"Well, if it is now over I am contented: but you will very much oblige me, sir, if you will inform me what has passed."

"You oblige me, madam, by the honour of your commands. I saw but too much reason to apprehend that measures the most violent would follow the affray of last night; yet as I found that the quarrel had been accidental, and the offence unpremeditated, I thought it not absolutely impossible that an expeditious mediation might effect a compromise: at least it was worth trying: for though wrath slowly kindled or long nourished is sullen and untractable, the sudden anger that has not had time to impress the mind with a deep sense of injury, will, when gently managed, be sometimes appeased with the same quickness it is excited: I hoped, therefore, that some trifling concession from Sir Robert, as the aggressor,—"

"Ah, sir!" cried Cecilia, "that, I fear, was not to be obtained!"

"Not by me, I must own," he answered; "but I was not

willing to think of the difficulty, and therefore ventured to make the proposal: nor did I leave the Opera-house till I had used every possible argument to persuade Sir Robert an apology would neither stain his courage nor his reputation. But his spirit brooked not the humiliation."

"Spirit!" cried Cecilia, "how mild a word! What, then, could poor Mr. Belfield resolve upon?"

"That, I believe, took him very little time to decide. I discovered by means of a gentleman at the Opera, who was acquainted with him, where he lived, and I waited upon him with an intention to offer my services towards settling the affair by arbitration: for since you call him *poor* Mr. Belfield, I think you will permit me, without offence to his antagonist, to own that his gallantry, though too impetuous for commendation, engaged me in his interest."

"I hope you don't think," cried Cecilia, "that an offence to his antagonist must necessarily be an offence to me?"

"Whatever I may have thought," answered he, looking at her with evident surprise, "I certainly did not wish that a sympathy offensive and defensive had been concluded between you. I could not, however, gain access to Mr. Belfield last night, but the affair dwelt upon my mind, and this morning I called at his lodging as soon as it was light."

"How good you have been!" cried Cecilia; "your kind offices have not, I hope, all proved ineffectual!"

"So valourous a Don Quixote," returned he, laughing, "certainly merited a faithful Esquire! he was, however, gone out, and nobody knew whither. About half an hour ago I called upon him again; he was then just returned home."

"Well, sir?"

"I saw him; the affair was over; and in a short time he will be able, if you will allow him so much honour, to thank you for these enquiries."

"He is, then, wounded?"

"He is a little hurt, but Sir Robert is perfectly safe. Belfield fired first, and missed; the Baronet was not so successless."

"I am grieved to hear it, indeed! and where is the wound?"

"The ball entered his right side, and the moment he felt

it, he fired his second pistol in the air. This I heard from his servant. He was brought home carefully and slowly; no surgeon had been upon the spot, but one was called to him immediately. I stayed to enquire his opinion after the wound had been dressed: he told me he had extracted the ball, and assured me Mr. Belfield was not in any danger. Your alarm, madam, last night, which had always been present to me, then encouraged me to take the liberty of waiting upon you: for I concluded you could yet have had no certain intelligence, and thought it best to let the plain and simple fact outrun the probable exaggeration of rumour."

Cecilia thanked him for his attention, and Mrs. Harrel then making her appearance, he arose and said, "Had my father known the honour I have had this morning of waiting upon Miss Beverley, I am sure I should have been charged with his compliments, and such a commission would somewhat have lessened the presumption of this visit; but I feared lest while I should be making interest for my credentials, the pretence of my embassy might be lost, and other couriers, less scrupulous, might obtain previous audiences, and anticipate my dispatches."

He then took his leave.

"This white domino, at last, then," said Cecilia, "is the son of Mr. Delvile! and thence the knowledge of my situation which gave me so much surprise:—a son how infinitely unlike his father!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Harrel, "and as unlike his mother too, for I assure you she is more proud and haughty even than the old gentleman. I hate the very sight of her, for she keeps every body in such awe that there's nothing but restraint in her presence. But the son is a very pretty young man, and much admired; though I have only seen him in public, for none of the family visit here."

Mr. Monckton, who now soon returned, was not a little surprised to find that all the intelligence he meant to communicate was already known: and not the more pleased to hear that the white domino, to whom before he owed no good-will, had thus officiously preceded him.

Mr. Arnott, who also came just after him, had been so little satisfied with the result of his enquiries, that from the

fear of encreasing the uneasiness of Cecilia, he determined not to make known whither he had been; but he soon found his forbearance was of no avail, as she was already acquainted with the duel and its consequences. Yet his unremitting desire to oblige her urged him twice in the course of the same day to again call at Mr. Belfield's lodgings, in order to bring her thence fresh and unsolicited intelligence.

Before breakfast was quite over, Miss Larolles, out of breath with eagerness, came to tell the news of the duel, in her way to *church*, as it was Sunday morning! and soon after Mrs. Mears, who also was followed by other ladies, brought the same account, which by all was addressed to Cecilia, with expressions of concern that convinced her, to her infinite vexation, she was generally regarded as the person chiefly interested in the accident.

Mr. Harrel did not return till late, but then seemed in very high spirits: "Miss Beverley," he cried, "I bring you news that will repay all your fright; Sir Robert is not only safe, but is come off conqueror."

"I am very sorry, sir," answered Cecilia, extremely provoked to be thus congratulated, "that anybody conquered, or anybody was vanquished."

"There is no need for sorrow," cried Mr. Harrel, "or for any thing but joy, for he has not killed his man; the victory, therefore, will neither cost him a flight nor a trial. To-day he means to wait upon you, and lay his laurels at your feet."

"He means, then, to take very fruitless trouble," said Cecilia, "for I have not any ambition to be so honoured."

"Ah, Miss Beverley," returned he, laughing, "this won't do now! it might have passed a little while ago, but it won't do now, I promise you!"

Cecilia, though much displeased by this accusation, found that disclaiming it only excited further raillery, and therefore prevailed upon herself to give him a quiet hearing, and scarce any reply.

At dinner, when Sir Robert arrived, the dislike she had originally taken to him, encreased already into disgust by his behaviour the preceding evening, was now fixed into the strongest aversion by the horror she conceived of his

fierceness, and the indignation she felt excited by his arrogance. He seemed, from the success of this duel, to think himself raised to the highest pinnacle of human glory; triumph sat exulting on his brow; he looked down on whoever he deigned to look at all, and showed that he thought his notice an honour, however imperious the manner in which it was accorded.

Upon Cecilia, however, he cast an eye of more complacency; he now believed her subdued, and his vanity revelled in the belief: her anxiety had so thoroughly satisfied him of her love, that she had hardly the power left to undeceive him; her silence he only attributed to admiration, her coldness to fear, and her reserve to shame.

Sickened by insolence so undisguised and unauthorised, and incensed at the triumph of his successful brutality, Cecilia with pain kept her seat, and with vexation reflected upon the necessity she was under of passing so large a portion of her time in company to which she was so extremely averse.

After dinner, when Mrs. Harrel was talking of her party for the evening, of which Cecilia declined making one, Sir Robert, with a sort of proud humility, that half feared rejection, and half proclaimed an indifference to meeting it, said "I don't much care for going further myself, if Miss Beverley will give me the honour of taking my tea with her."

Cecilia, regarding him with much surprise, answered that she had letters to write into the country, which would confine her to her own room for the rest of the evening. The Baronet, looking at his watch, instantly cried "Faith, that is very fortunate, for I have just recollected an engagement at the other end of the town which had slipt my memory."

Soon after they were all gone, Cecilia received a note from Mrs. Delvile, begging the favour of her company the next morning to breakfast. She readily accepted the invitation, though she was by no means prepared, by the character she had heard of her, to expect much pleasure from an acquaintance with that lady.

CHAPTER VI.

A FAMILY PARTY.

CECILIA, the next morning, between nine and ten o'clock, went to St. James's square; she found nobody immediately ready to receive her, but in a short time was waited upon by Mr. Delvile.

After the usual salutations, "Miss Beverley," he said, "I have given express orders to my people, that I may not be interrupted while I have the pleasure of passing some minutes in conversation with you, before you are presented to Mrs. Delvile."

And then, with an air of solemnity, he led her to a seat; and having himself taken possession of another, continued his speech. "I have received information, from authority which I cannot doubt, that the indiscretion of certain of your admirers last Saturday at the Opera-House, occasioned a disturbance which to a young woman of delicacy I should imagine must be very alarming: now, as I consider myself concerned in your fame and welfare, from regarding you as my ward, I think it is incumbent upon me to make enquiries into such of your affairs as become public; for I should feel in some measure disgraced myself, should it appear to the world, while you are under my guardianship, that there was any want of propriety in the direction of your conduct."

Cecilia, not much flattered by this address, gravely answered, that she fancied the affair had been misrepresented to him.

"I am not much addicted," he replied, "to give ear to anything lightly; you must therefore permit me to enquire into the merits of the cause, and then to draw my own inferences. And let me, at the same time, assure you, there is no other young lady who has any right to expect such an attention from me. I must begin by begging you to inform me, upon what grounds the two gentlemen in question, for such, by courtesy, I presume they are called, thought themselves entitled publicly to dispute your favour?"

"My favour, sir!" cried Cecilia, much amazed.

"My dear," said he, with a complacency meant to give her courage, "I know the question is difficult for a young lady to answer; but be not abashed, I should be sorry to distress you, and mean to the utmost of my power to save your blushes. Do not, therefore, fear me; consider me as your guardian, and assure yourself I am perfectly well disposed to consider you as my ward. Acquaint me, then, freely, what are the pretensions of these gentlemen?"

"To me, sir, they have, I believe, no pretensions at all."

"I see you are shy," returned he, with encreasing gentleness; "I see you cannot be easy with me; and when I consider how little you are accustomed to me, I do not wonder. But pray take courage; I think it necessary to inform myself of your affairs, and therefore I beg you will speak to me with freedom."

Cecilia, more and more mortified by this humiliating condescension, again assured him he had been misinformed; and was again, though discredited, praised for her modesty; when, to her great relief, they were interrupted by the entrance of her friend the *white domino*.

"Mortimer," said Mr. Delvile, "I understand you have already had the pleasure of seeing this young lady?"

"Yes, sir," he answered; "I have more than once had that happiness, but I have never had the honour of being introduced to her."

"Miss Beverley, then," said the father, "I must present to you Mr. Mortimer Delvile, my son; and, Mortimer, in Miss Beverley I desire you will remember that you respect a ward of your father's."

"I will not, sir," answered he, "forget an injunction my own inclinations had already out-run."

Mortimer Delvile was tall and finely formed; his features, though not handsome, were full of expression; and a noble openness of manners and address spoke the elegance of his education, and the liberality of his mind.

When this introduction was over, a more general conversation took place, till Mr. Delvile, suddenly rising, said to Cecilia, "You will pardon me, Miss Beverley, if I leave you for a few minutes; one of my tenants sets out to-morrow

morning for my estate in the north, and he has been two hours waiting to speak with me. But if my son is not particularly engaged, I am sure he will be so good as to do the honours of the house till his mother is ready to receive you."

And then, graciously waving his hand, he quitted the room.

"My father," cried young Delvile, "has left me an office, which, could I execute it as perfectly as I shall willingly, would be performed without a fault."

"I am very sorry," said Cecilia, "that I have so much mistaken your hour of breakfast; but let me not be any restraint upon you; I shall find a book, or a newspaper, or something to fill up the time till Mrs. Delvile honours me with a summons."

"You can only be a restraint upon me," answered he, "by commanding me from your presence. I breakfasted long ago, and am now just come from Mr. Belfield. I had the pleasure, this morning, of being admitted into his room."

"And how, sir, did you find him?"

"Not so well, I fear, as he thinks himself; but he was in high spirits, and surrounded by his friends, whom he was entertaining with all the gaiety of a man in full health, and entirely at his ease; though I perceived, by the frequent changes of his countenance, signs of pain and indisposition, that made me, however pleased with his conversation, think it necessary to shorten my own visit, and to hint to those who were near me the propriety of leaving him quiet."

"Did you see his surgeon, sir?"

"No; but he told me he should only have one dressing more of his wound, and then get rid of the whole business by running into the country."

"Were you acquainted with him, sir, before this accident?"

"No, not all; but the little I have seen of him has strongly interested me in his favour. At Mr. Harrel's masquerade, where I first met with him, I was extremely entertained by his humour,—though there, perhaps, as I had also the honour of first seeing Miss Beverley, I might be too happy to feel much difficulty in being pleased. And

even at the Opera he had the advantage of finding me in the same favourable disposition, as I had long distinguished you before I had taken any notice of him. I must, however, confess I did not think his anger that evening quite without provocation,—but I beg your pardon, I may perhaps be mistaken, and you, who know the whole affair, must undoubtedly be better able to account for what happened."

Here he fixed his eyes upon Cecilia, with a look of curiosity that seemed eager to penetrate into her sentiments of the two antagonists.

"No, certainly," she answered; "he had all the provocation that ill-breeding could give him."

"And do you, madam," cried he, with much surprise, "judge of this matter with such severity?"

"No, not with severity, simply with candour."

"With candour? Alas, then, poor Sir Robert! Severity were not half so bad a sign for him!"

A servant now came in, to acquaint Cecilia that Mrs. Delvile waited breakfast for her.

This summons was immediately followed by the re-entrance of Mr. Delvile, who, taking her hand, said he would himself present her to his lady, and with much graciousness assured her of a kind reception.

The ceremonies preceding this interview, added to the character she had already heard of Mrs. Delvile, made Cecilia heartily wish it over; but, assuming all the courage in her power, she determined to support herself with a spirit that should struggle against the ostentatious superiority she was prepared to expect.

She found her seated upon a sofa, from which, however, she arose at her approach; but the moment Cecilia beheld her, all the unfavourable impressions with which she came into her presence immediately vanished, and that respect which the formalities of her introduction had failed to inspire, her air, figure, and countenance instantaneously excited.

She was not more than fifty years of age; her complexion, though faded, kept the traces of her former loveliness; her eyes, though they had lost their youthful fire, retained a lustre that evinced their primeval brilliancy; and the fine symmetry

of her features, still uninjured by the siege of time, not only indicated the perfection of her juvenile beauty, but still laid claim to admiration in every beholder.

Her carriage was lofty and commanding; but the dignity to which high birth and conscious superiority gave rise, was so judiciously regulated by good sense, and so happily blended with politeness, that though the world at large envied or hated her, the few for whom she had herself any regard, she was infallibly certain to captivate.

The surprise and admiration with which Cecilia at the first glance was struck, proved reciprocal; Mrs. Delvile, though prepared for youth and beauty, expected not to see a countenance so intelligent, nor manners so well formed as those of Cecilia: thus mutually astonished and mutually pleased, their first salutations were accompanied by looks so flattering to both, that each saw in the other an immediate prepossession in her favour; and from the moment that they met, they seemed instinctively impelled to admire.

"I have promised Miss Beverley, madam," said Mr. Delvile to his lady, "that you would give her a kind reception; and I need not remind you that my promises are always held sacred."

"But I hope you have not also promised," cried she, with quickness, "that I should give *you* a kind reception, for I feel at this very moment extremely inclined to quarrel with you."

"Why so, madam?"

"For not bringing us together sooner; for now I have seen her, I already look back with regret to the time I have lost without the pleasure of knowing her."

"What a claim is this," cried young Delvile, "upon the benevolence of Miss Beverley! for if she has not now the indulgence by frequent and diligent visits to make some reparation, she must consider herself as responsible for the dissension she will occasion."

"If peace depends upon my visits," answered Cecilia, "it may immediately be proclaimed; were it to be procured only by my absence, I know not if I should so readily agree to the conditions."

"I must request of you, madam," said Mr. Delvile, "that when my son and I retire, you will bestow half an hour

upon this young lady, in making enquiries concerning the disturbance last Saturday at the Opera-House. I have not, myself, so much time to spare, as I have several appointments for this morning; but I am sure you will not object to the office, as I know you to be equally anxious with myself, that the minority of Miss Beverley should pass without reproach."

"Not only her minority, but her maturity," cried young Delvile, warmly; "and not only her maturity, but her decline of life will pass, I hope, not merely without reproach, but with fame and applause!"

"I hope so too," replied Mr. Delvile: "I wish her well through every stage of her life; but for her minority alone it is my business to do more than wish. For that, I feel my own honour and my own credit concerned; my honour, as I gave it to the Dean, that I would superintend her conduct; and my credit, as the world is acquainted with the claim she has to my protection."

"I will not make any enquiries," said Mrs. Delvile, turning to Cecilia with a sweetness that recompensed her for the haughtiness of her guardian, "till I have had some opportunity of convincing Miss Beverley, that my regard for her merits they should be answered."

"You see, Miss Beverley," said Mr. Delvile, "how little reason you had to be afraid of us; Mrs. Delvile is as much disposed in your favour as myself, and as desirous to be of service to you. Endeavour, therefore, to cast off this timidity, and to make yourself easy. You must come to us often; use will do more towards removing your fears, than all the encouragement we can give you."

"But what are the fears," cried Mrs. Delvile, "that Miss Beverley can have to remove? unless, indeed, she apprehends her visits will make us encroachers, and that the more we are favoured with her presence, the less we shall bear her absence."

"Pray, son," said Mr. Delvile, "what was the name of the person who was Sir Robert Floyer's opponent? I have again forgotten it."

"Belfield, sir."

"True; it is a name I am perfectly unacquainted with: however, he may possibly be a very good sort of man; but

certainly his opposing himself to Sir Robert Floyer, a man of some family, a gentleman, rich, and allied to some people of distinction, was a rather strange circumstance. I mean not, however, to prejudge the case; I will hear it fairly stated; and I am the more disposed to be cautious in what I pronounce, because I am persuaded Miss Beverley has too much sense to let my advice be thrown away upon her."

"I hope so, sir; but with respect to the disturbance at the Opera, I know not that I have the least occasion to trouble you."

"If your measures," said he, very gravely, "are already taken, the Dean, your uncle prevailed upon me to accept a very useless office; but if anything is yet undecided, it will not, perhaps, be amiss that I should be consulted. Meantime, I will only recommend to you to consider, that Mr. Belfield is a person whose name nobody has heard, and that a connection with Sir Robert Floyer would certainly be very honourable for you."

"Indeed, sir," said Cecilia, "here is some great mistake; neither of these gentlemen, I believe, think of me at all."

"They have taken, then," cried young Delvile, with a laugh, "a very extraordinary method to prove their indifference!"

"The affairs of Sir Robert Floyer," continued Mr. Delvile, "are indeed, I am informed, in some disorder; but he has a noble estate, and your fortune would soon clear all its incumbrances. Such an alliance, therefore, would be mutually advantageous: but what would result from a union with such a person as Mr. Belfield? He is of no family, though in that, perhaps, you would not be very scrupulous; but neither has he any money; what, then, recommends him?"

"To me, sir, nothing!" answered Cecilia.

"And to me," cried young Delvile, "almost everything! He has wit, spirit, and understanding; talents to create admiration; and qualities, I believe, to engage esteem!"

"You speak warmly," said Mrs. Delvile; "but if such is his character, he merits your earnestness. What is it you know of him?"

"Not enough, perhaps," answered he, "to coolly justify my praise; but he is one of those whose first appearance takes the mind by surprise, and leaves the judgment to make afterwards such terms as it can. Will you, madam, when he is recovered, permit me to introduce him to you?"

"Certainly," said she, smiling; "but have a care your recommendation does not disgrace your discernment."

"This warmth of disposition, Mortimer," cried Mr. Delvile, "produces nothing but difficulties and trouble: you neglect the connections I point out, and which a little attention might render serviceable as well as honourable, and run precipitately into forming such as can do you no good among people of rank, and are not only profitless in themselves, but generally lead you into expense and inconvenience. You are now of an age to correct this rashness: think, therefore, better of your own consequence, than thus idly to degrade yourself, by forming friendships with every showy adventurer that comes in your way."

"I know not, sir," answered he, "how Mr. Belfield deserves to be called an adventurer: he is not, indeed, rich; but he is in a profession where parts such as his seldom fail to acquire riches; however, as, to me, his wealth can be of no consequence, why should my regard for him wait for it? If he is a young man of worth and honour——"

"Mortimer," interrupted Mr. Delvile, "whatever he is, we know he is not a man of rank; and whatever he may be, we know he cannot become a man of family, and, consequently, for Mortimer Delvile he is no companion. If you can render him any service, I shall commend your so doing; it becomes your birth, it becomes your station in life to assist individuals, and promote the general good: but never in your zeal for others forget what is due to yourself, and to the ancient and honourable house from which you are sprung."

"But can we entertain Miss Beverley with nothing better than family lectures?" cried Mrs. Delvile.

"It is for me," said young Delvile, rising, "to beg pardon of Miss Beverley for having occasioned them: but when she is so good as to honour us with her company again, I hope I shall have more discretion."

He then left the room; and Mr. Delvile also rising to go, said, "My dear, I commit you to very kind hands: Mrs. Delvile, I am sure, will be happy to hear your story; speak to her, therefore, without reserve. And pray don't imagine that I make you over to her from any slight; on the contrary, I admire and commend your modesty very much; but my time is extremely precious, and I cannot devote so much of it to an explanation as your diffidence requires."

And then, to the great joy of Cecilia, he retired; leaving her much in doubt whether his haughtiness or his condescension humbled her most.

"These men," said Mrs. Delvile, "can never comprehend the pain of a delicate female mind, upon entering into explanations of this sort: I understand it, however, too well to inflict it. We will, therefore, have no explanations at all till we are better acquainted; and then, if you will venture to favour me with any confidence, my best advice, and, should any be in my power, my best services shall be at your command."

"You do me, madam, much honour," answered Cecilia: "but I must assure you I have no explanation to give."

"Well, well, at present," returned Mrs. Delvile, "I am content to hear that answer, as I have acquired no right to any other: but hereafter I shall hope for more openness: it is promised me by your countenance, and I mean to claim the promise by my friendship."

"Your friendship will both honour and delight me, and whatever are your enquiries, I shall always be proud to answer them; but indeed, with regard to this affair ——"

"My dear Miss Beverley," interrupted Mrs. Delvile, with a look of arch incredulity, "men seldom risk their lives where an escape is without hope of recompense. But we will not now say a word more upon the subject. I hope you will often favour me with your company, and by the frequency of your visits make us both forget the shortness of our acquaintance."

Cecilia, finding her resistance only gave birth to fresh suspicion, now yielded, satisfied that a very little time must unavoidably clear up the truth. But her visit was not therefore shortened; the sudden partiality with which the

figure and countenance of Mrs. Delvile had impressed her, was quickly ripened into esteem by the charms of her conversation: she found her sensible, well bred, and high spirited; gifted by nature with superior talents, and polished by education and study with all the elegant embellishments of cultivation. She saw in her, indeed, some portion of the pride she had been taught to expect; but it was so much softened by elegance, and so well tempered with kindness, that it elevated her character, without rendering her manners offensive.

With such a woman, subjects of discourse could never be wanting, nor fertility of powers to make them entertaining: and so much was Cecilia delighted with her visit, that though her carriage was announced at twelve o'clock, she reluctantly concluded it at two; and in taking her leave, gladly accepted an invitation to dine with her new friend three days after; who, equally pleased with her young guest, promised before that time to return her visit.

CHAPTER VII.

AN EXAMINATION.

CECILIA found Mrs. Harrel eagerly waiting to hear some account how she had passed the morning, and fully persuaded that she would leave the Delviles with a determination never more, but by necessity, to see them: she was, therefore, not only surprised but disappointed, when instead of fulfilling her expectations, she assured her that she had been delighted with Mrs. Delvile, whose engaging qualities amply recompensed her for the arrogance of her husband; that her visit had no fault but that of being too short; and that she had already appointed an early day for repeating it.

Mrs. Harrel was evidently hurt by this praise; and Cecilia, who perceived among all her guardians a powerful disposition to hatred and jealousy, soon dropt the subject: though so much had she been charmed with Mrs. Delvile,

that a scheme of removal once more occurred to her, notwithstanding her dislike of her stately guardian.

At dinner, as usual, they were joined by Sir Robert Floyer, who grew more and more assiduous in his attendance, but who, this day, contrary to his general custom of remaining with the gentlemen, made his exit before the ladies left the table; and as soon as he was gone, Mr. Harrel desired a private conference with Cecilia.

They went together to the drawing-room, where, after a flourishing preface upon the merits of Sir Robert Floyer, he formally acquainted her that he was commissioned by that gentleman, to make her a tender of his hand and fortune.

Cecilia, who had not much reason to be surprised at this overture, desired him to tell the Baronet, she was obliged to him for the honour he intended her, at the same time that she absolutely declined receiving it.

Mr. Harrel, laughing, told her this answer was very well for a beginning, though it would by no means serve beyond the first day of the declaration; but when Cecilia assured him she should firmly adhere to it, he remonstrated, with equal surprise and discontent, upon the reasons of her refusal. She thought it sufficient to tell him that Sir Robert did not please her; but, with much raillery, he denied the assertion credit, assuring her that he was universally admired by the ladies, that she could not possibly receive a more honourable offer, and that he was reckoned by everybody the finest gentleman about the town. His fortune, he added, was equally unexceptionable with his figure and his rank in life; all the world, he was certain, would approve the connection, and the settlement made upon her should be dictated by herself.

Cecilia begged him to be satisfied with an answer which she never could change, and to spare her the enumeration of particular objections, since Sir Robert was wholly and in every respect disagreeable to her.

"What, then," cried he, "could make you so frightened for him at the Opera-house? There has been but one opinion about town ever since, of your prepossession in his favour."

"I am extremely concerned to hear it; my fright was

but the effect of surprise, and belonged not more to Sir Robert than to Mr. Belfield."

He told her that nobody else thought the same; that her marriage with the Baronet was universally expected; and, in conclusion, notwithstanding her earnest desire that he would instantly and explicitly inform Sir Robert of her determination, he repeatedly refused to give him any final answer, till she had taken more time for consideration.

Cecilia was extremely displeased at this irksome importunity, and still more chagrined to find her incautious emotion at the Opera-House, had given rise to suspicions of her harbouring a partiality for a man whom every day she more heartily disliked.

While she was deliberating in what manner she could clear up this mistake, which, after she was left alone, occupied all her thoughts, she was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Monckton, whose joy in meeting her at length by herself exceeded not her own; for charmed as he was that he could now examine into the state of her affairs, she was not less delighted that she could make them known to him.

After mutual expressions, guarded, however, on the part of Mr. Monckton, though unreserved on that of Cecilia, of their satisfaction in being again able to converse as in former times, he asked if she would permit him, as the privilege of their long acquaintance, to speak to her with sincerity.

She assured him he could not more oblige her.

"Let me, then," said he, "enquire if yet that ardent confidence in your own steadiness, which so much disdained my fears that the change of your residence might produce a change in your sentiments, is still as unshaken as when we parted in Suffolk? or whether experience, that foe to unpractised refinement, has already taught you the fallibility of theory?"

"When I assure you," replied Cecilia, "that your enquiry gives me no pain, I think I have sufficiently answered it; for were I conscious of any alteration, it could not but embarrass and distress me. Very far, however, from finding myself in the danger with which you threatened me, of *forgetting Bury, its inhabitants and its environs*, I think with

pleasure of little else, since London, instead of bewitching, has greatly disappointed me."

"How so?" cried Mr. Monckton, much delighted.

"Not," answered she, "in itself, not in its magnificence, nor in its diversions, which seem to be inexhaustible; but these, though copious as instruments of pleasure, are very shallow as sources of happiness: the disappointment, therefore, comes nearer home, and springs not from London, but from my own situation."

"Is that, then, disagreeable to you?"

"You shall yourself judge, when I have told you that from the time of my quitting your house till this very moment, when I have again the happiness of talking with you, I have never once had any conversation, society or intercourse, in which friendship or affection have had any share, or my mind has had the least interest."

She then entered into a detail of her way of life, told him how little suited to her taste was the unbounded dissipation of the Harrels, and feelingly expatiated upon the disappointment she had received from the alteration in the manners and conduct of her young friend. "In her," she continued, "had I found the companion I came prepared to meet, the companion from whom I had so lately parted, and in whose society I expected to find consolation for the loss of yours and of Mrs. Charlton's, I should have complained of nothing; the very places that now tire, might then have entertained me; and all that passes for unmeaning dissipation might have worn the appearance of variety and pleasure. But where the mind is wholly without interest, everything is languid and insipid; and accustomed as I have long been to think friendship the first of human blessings, and social converse the greatest of human enjoyments, how ever can I reconcile myself to a state of careless indifference, to making acquaintance without any concern either for preserving or esteeming them, and to going on from day to day in an eager search of amusement, with no companion for the hours of retirement, and no view beyond that of passing the present moment in apparent gaiety and thoughtlessness?"[1]

[1] "December 23, 1782.—I begin to grow most heartily sick of this continual round of visiting, and these eternal new acquaintances. I am

Mr. Monckton, who heard these complaints with secret rapture, far from seeking to soften or remove, used his utmost endeavours to strengthen and encrease them, by artfully retracing her former way of life, and pointing out with added censures the change in it she had been lately compelled to make: "a change," he continued, "which, though ruinous of your time, and detrimental to your happiness, use will, I fear, familiarize, and familiarity render pleasant."

"These suspicions, sir," said Cecilia, "mortify me greatly; and why, when far from finding me pleased, you hear nothing but repining, should you still continue to harbour them?"

"Because your trial has yet been too short to prove your firmness, and because there is nothing to which time cannot contentedly accustom us."

"I feel not much fear," said Cecilia, "of standing such a test as might fully satisfy you; but nevertheless, not to be too presumptuous, I have by no means exposed myself to all the dangers which you think surround me, for of late I have spent almost every evening at home and by myself."

This intelligence was to Mr. Monckton a surprise the most agreeable he could receive. Her distaste for the amusements which were offered her, greatly relieved his fears of her forming any alarming connection; and the discovery that while so anxiously he had sought her everywhere in public, she had quietly passed her time by her own fire-side, not only re-assured him for the present, but gave him information where he might meet with her in future.

He then talked of the duel, and solicitously led her to speak openly of Sir Robert Floyer: and here, too, his satis-

now arranging matters in my mind for a better plan; and I mean, henceforward, never to go out more than three days in the week; . . . . I really have at present no pleasure in any party, from the trouble and tiresomeness of being engaged to so many. For my own part, if I wished to prescribe a cure for dissipation, I should think none more effectual than to give it a free course. The many who have lived so from year to year amaze me now more than ever; for now more than ever I can judge what dissipation has to offer. I would not lead a life of daily engagements even for another month, for any pay short of the most serious and substantial benefit."—*Diary of Madame D'Arblay*, p. 210, vol. ii.

faction was entire; he found her dislike of him such as his knowledge of her disposition made him expect; and she wholly removed his suspicions concerning her anxiety about the quarrel, by explaining to him her apprehensions of having occasioned it herself.

Neither did her confidence rest here; she acquainted him with the conversation she had just had with Mr. Harrel, and begged his advice in what manner she might secure herself from further importunity.

Mr. Monckton had now a new subject for his discernment. Every thing had confirmed to him the passion which Mr. Arnott had conceived for Cecilia, and he had therefore concluded the interest of the Harrels would be all in his favour: other ideas now struck him; he found that Mr. Arnott was given up for Sir Robert; and he determined carefully to watch the motions both of the Baronet and her young guardian, in order to discover the nature of their plans and connection. Meantime, convinced by her unaffected aversion to the proposals she had received, that she was at present in no danger from the league he suspected, he merely advised her to persevere in manifesting a calm repugnance to their solicitations, which could not fail, before long, to dishearten them both.

"But, sir," cried Cecilia, "I now fear this man as much as I dislike him, for his late fierceness and brutality, though they have encreased my disgust, make me dread to show it. I am impatient, therefore, to have done with him, and to see him no more. And for this purpose, I wish to quit the house of Mr. Harrel, where he has access at his pleasure."

"You can wish nothing more judiciously," cried he; "would you, then, return into the country?"

"That is not yet in my power; I am obliged to reside with one of my guardians. To-day I have seen Mrs. Delvile, and——"

"Mrs. Delvile?" interrupted Mr. Monckton, in a voice of astonishment, "Surely you do not think of removing into that family?"

"What can I do so well? Mrs. Delvile is a charming woman, and her conversation would afford me more entertainment and instruction in a single day, than under this roof I should obtain in a twelvemonth."

"Are you serious? Do you really think of making such a change?"

"I really wish it, but I know not yet if it is practicable: on Thursday, however, I am to dine with her, and then, if it is in my power, I will hint to her my desire."

"And can Miss Beverley possibly wish," cried Mr. Monckton with earnestness, "to reside in such a house? Is not Mr. Delvile the most ostentatious, haughty, and self-sufficient of men? Is not his wife the proudest of women? And is not the whole family odious to all the world?"

"You amaze me!" cried Cecilia; "surely that cannot be their general character? Mr. Delvile, indeed, deserves all the censure he can meet, for his wearisome parade of superiority; but his lady by no means merits to be included in the same reproach. I have spent this whole morning with her, and though I waited upon her with a strong prejudice in her disfavour, I observed in her no pride that exceeded the bounds of propriety and native dignity."

"Have you often been at the house? Do you know the son, too?"

"I have seen him three or four times."

"And what do you think of him?"

"I hardly know enough of him to judge fairly."

"But what does he seem to you? Do you not perceive in him already all the arrogance, all the contemptuous insolence of his father?"

"O no! far from it indeed; his mind seems to be liberal and noble, open to impressions of merit, and eager to honour and promote it."

"You are much deceived: you have been reading your own mind, and thought you had read his; I would advise you sedulously to avoid the whole family; you will find all intercourse with them irksome and comfortless: such as the father appears at once, the wife and the son will, in a few more meetings, appear also. They are descended from the same stock, and inherit the same self-complacency. Mr. Delvile married his cousin, and each of them instigates the other to believe that all birth and rank would be at an end in the world, if their own superb family had not a promise of support from their hopeful Mortimer. Should you pre-

cipitately settle yourself in their house, you would very soon be totally weighed down by their united insolence."

Cecilia again and warmly attempted to defend them; but Mr. Monckton was so positive in his assertions, and so significant in his insinuations to their discredit, that she was at length persuaded she had judged too hastily, and, after thanking him for his counsel, promised not to take any measures towards a removal without his advice.

This was all he desired; and now, enlivened by finding that his influence with her was unimpaired, and that her heart was yet her own, he ceased his exhortations, and turned the discourse to subjects more gay and general, judiciously cautious neither by tedious admonitions to disgust, nor by fretful solicitude to alarm her. He did not quit her till the evening was far advanced, and then, in returning to his own house, felt all his anxieties and disappointments recompensed by the comfort this long and satisfactory conversation had afforded him. While Cecilia, charmed with having spent the morning with her new acquaintance, and the evening with her old friend, retired to rest better pleased with the disposal of her time than she had yet been since her journey from Suffolk.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TÊTE À TÊTE.

THE two following days had neither event nor disturbance, except some little vexation occasioned by the behaviour of Sir Robert Floyer, who still appeared not to entertain any doubt of the success of his addresses. This impertinent confidence she could only attribute to the officious encouragement of Mr. Harrel, and therefore she determined rather to seek than to avoid an explanation with him. But she had, in the mean time, the satisfaction of hearing from Mr. Arnott, who, ever eager to oblige her, was frequent in his enquiries, that Mr. Belfield was almost entirely recovered.

On Thursday, according to her appointment, she again went to St. James's-square, and being shown into the

drawing-room till dinner was ready, found there only young Mr. Delvile.

After some general conversation, he asked her how lately she had had any news of Mr. Belfield?

"This morning," she answered, "when I had the pleasure of hearing he was quite recovered. Have you seen him again, sir?"

"Yes, madam, twice."

"And did you think him almost well?"

"I thought," answered he, with some hesitation, "and I think still, that your enquiries ought to be his cure."

"O," cried Cecilia, "I hope he has far better medicines: but I am afraid I have been misinformed, for I see you do not think him better."

"You must not, however," replied he, "blame those messengers whose artifice has only had your satisfaction in view; nor should I be so malignant as to blast their designs, if I did not fear that Mr. Belfield's actual safety may be endangered by your continued deception."

"What deception, sir? I don't at all understand you. How is his safety endangered?"

"Ah madam!" said he smiling, "what danger indeed is there that any man would not risk to give birth to such solicitude! Mr. Belfield however, I believe, is in none from which a command of yours cannot rescue him.'

"Then were I an hard-hearted damsel indeed not to issue it! but if my commands are so medicinal, pray instruct me how to administer them."

"You must order him to give up, for the present, his plan of going into the country, where he can have no assistance, and where his wound must be dressed only by a common servant, and to remain quietly in town, till his surgeon pronounces that he may travel without any hazard."

"But is he, seriously, so mad as to intend leaving town without the consent of his surgeon?"

"Nothing less than such an intention could have induced me to undeceive you with respect to his recovery. But, indeed, I am no friend to those artifices which purchase present relief by future misery: I venture, therefore, to speak to you the simple truth, that by a timely exertion of your influence you may prevent further evil."

"I know not, sir," said Cecilia with the utmost surprise, "why you should suppose I have any such influence: nor can I imagine that any deception has been practised."

"It is possible," answered he, "I may have been too much alarmed; but in such a case as this, no information ought to be depended upon but that of his surgeon. You, madam, may probably know his opinion?"

"Me?—No, indeed! I never saw his surgeon: I know not even who he is."

"I purpose calling upon him to-morrow morning; will Miss Beverley permit me afterwards the honour of communicating to her what may pass?"

"I thank you, sir," said she, colouring very high; "but my impatience is by no means so great as to occasion my giving you that trouble."

Delvile, perceiving her change of countenance, instantly, and with much respect, entreated her pardon for the proposal; which, however, she had no sooner granted, than he said very archly, "Why, indeed, you have not much right to be angry, since it was your own frankness that excited mine. And thus, you find, like most other culprits, I am ready to cast the blame of the offence upon the offended. I feel, however, an irresistible propensity to do service to Mr. Belfield;—shall I sin quite beyond forgiveness if I venture to tell you how I found him situated this morning?"

"No, certainly,—if you wish it, I can have no objection."

"I found him, then, surrounded by a set of gay young men, who, by way of keeping up his spirits, made him laugh and talk without ceasing: he assured me himself that he was perfectly well, and intended to gallop out of town to-morrow morning; though, when I shook hands with him at parting, I was both shocked and alarmed to feel, by the burning heat of his skin, that, far from discarding his surgeon, he ought rather to call in a physician."

"I am very much concerned to hear this account," said Cecilia; "but I do not well understand what you mean should on my part follow it?"

"That," answered he, bowing, with a look of mock gravity, "I pretend not to settle! In stating the case I have satisfied my conscience, and if in hearing it you can pardon

the liberty I have taken, I shall as much honour the openness of your character, as I admire that of your countenance."

Cecilia now, to her no little astonishment, found she had the same mistake to clear up at present concerning Mr. Belfield, that only three days before she had explained with respect to the Baronet. But she had no time to speak further upon the subject, as the entrance of Mrs. Delvile put an end to their discourse.

That lady received her with the most distinguishing kindness; apologised for not sooner waiting upon her, and repeatedly declared that nothing but indisposition should have prevented her returning the favour of her first visit.

They were soon after summoned to dinner. Mr. Delvile, to the infinite joy of Cecilia, was out.

The day was spent greatly to her satisfaction. There was no interruption from visitors, she was tormented by the discussion of no disagreeable subjects, the duel was not mentioned, the antagonists were not hinted at, she was teased with no self-sufficient encouragement, and wearied with no mortifying affability; the conversation at once was lively and rational, and though general, was rendered interesting by a reciprocation of good-will and pleasure in the conversers.

The favourable opinion she had conceived both of the mother and the son this long visit served to confirm: in Mrs. Delvile she found strong sense, quick parts, and high breeding; in Mortimer, sincerity and vivacity joined with softness and elegance; and in both there seemed the most liberal admiration of talents, with an openness of heart that disdained all disguise. Greatly pleased with their manners, and struck with all that was apparent in their characters, she much regretted the prejudice of Mr. Monckton, which now, with the promise she had given him, was all that opposed her making an immediate effort towards a change in her abode.

She did not take her leave till eleven o'clock, when Mrs. Delvile, after repeatedly thanking her for her visit, said she would not so much encroach upon her good-nature as to request another till she had waited upon her in return; but added, that she meant very speedily to pay that debt, in order to enable herself, by friendly and frequent meetings,

to enter upon the confidential commission with which her guardian had entrusted her.

Cecilia was pleased with the delicacy which gave rise to this forbearance, yet having in fact nothing either to relate or conceal, she was rather sorry than glad at the delay of an explanation, since she found the whole family was in an error with respect to the situation of her affairs.

CHAPTER IX.

AN APPLICATION.

CECILIA, upon her return home, heard with some surprise that Mr. and Mrs. Harrel were by themselves in the drawing-room; and, while she was upon the stairs, Mrs. Harrel ran out, calling eagerly, "Is that my brother?"

Before she could make an answer, Mr. Harrel, in the same impatient tone, exclaimed, "Is it Mr. Arnott?"

"No," said Cecilia, "did you expect him so late?"

"Expect him? Yes," answered Mr. Harrel, "I have expected him the whole evening, and cannot conceive what he has done with himself."

"'Tis abominably provoking," said Mrs. Harrel, "that he should be out of the way just now when he is wanted. However, I daresay to-morrow will do as well."

"I don't know that," cried Mr. Harrel; "Reeves is such a wretch that I am sure he will give me all the trouble in his power."

Here Mr. Arnott entered; and Mrs. Harrel called out "O, brother, we have been distressed for you cruelly; we have had a man here who has plagued Mr. Harrel to death, and we wanted you sadly to speak to him."

"I should have been very glad," said Mr. Arnott, "to have been of any use, and perhaps it is not yet too late; who is the man?"

"O," cried Mr. Harrel, carelessly, "only a fellow from that rascally tailor who has been so troublesome to me lately. He has had the impudence, because I did not pay him the moment he was pleased to want his money, to put the bill into the hands of one Reeves, a griping attorney,

who has been here this evening, and thought proper to talk to me pretty freely. I can tell the gentleman I shall not easily forget his impertinence! however I really wish meantime I could get rid of him."

"How much is the bill, sir?" said Mr. Arnott.

"Why, it's rather a round sum; but I don't know how it is, one's bills mount up before one is aware: those fellows charge such confounded sums for tape and buckram; I hardly know what I have had of him, and yet he has run me up a bill of between three and four hundred pounds."

Here there was a general silence; till Mrs. Harrel said "Brother, can't you be so good as to lend us the money? Mr. Harrel says he can pay it again very soon."

"O yes, very soon," said Mr. Harrel, "for I shall receive a great deal of money in a little time; I only want to stop this fellow's mouth for the present."

"Suppose I go and talk with him?" said Mr. Arnott.

"O, he's a brute, a stock!" cried Mr. Harrel; "nothing but the money will satisfy him: he will hear no reason; one might as well talk to a stone."

Mr. Arnott now looked extremely distressed; but upon his sister's warmly pressing him not to lose any time, he gently said, "If this person will but wait a week or two, I should be extremely glad, for really just now I cannot take up so much money without such particular loss and inconvenience, that I hardly know how to do it:—but yet, if he will not be appeased, he must certainly have it."

"Appeased?" cried Mr. Harrel, "you might as well appease the sea in a storm! he is as hard as iron."

Mr. Arnott, then, forcing a smile, though evidently in much uneasiness, said he would not fail to raise the money the next morning, and was taking his leave, when Cecilia, shocked that such tenderness and good-nature should be thus grossly imposed upon, hastily begged to speak with Mrs. Harrel, and taking her into another room, said, "I beseech you, my dear friend, let not your worthy brother suffer by his generosity; permit me in the present exigence to assist Mr. Harrel: my having such a sum advanced can be of no consequence; but I should grieve indeed that your brother, who so nobly understands the use of money, should take it up at any particular disadvantage."

"You are vastly kindly," said Mrs. Harrel, "and I will run and speak to them about it: but whichever of you lends the money, Mr. Harrel has assured me he shall pay it very soon."

She then returned with the proposition. Mr. Arnott strongly opposed it, but Mr. Harrel seemed rather to prefer it, yet spoke so confidently of his speedy payment, that he appeared to think it a matter of little importance from which he accepted it. A generous contest ensued between Mr. Arnott and Cecilia, but as she was very earnest, she at length prevailed, and settled to go herself the next morning into the city, in order to have the money advanced by Mr. Briggs, who had the management of her fortune entirely to himself, her other guardians never interfering in the executive part of her affairs.

This arranged, they all retired.

And then, with encreasing astonishment, Cecilia reflected upon the ruinous levity of Mr. Harrel, and the blind security of his wife; she saw in their situation danger the most alarming, and in the behaviour of Mr. Harrel selfishness the most inexcusable; such glaring injustice to his creditors, such utter insensibility to his friends, took from her all wish of assisting him, though the indignant compassion with which she saw the easy generosity of Mr. Arnott so frequently abused, had now, for his sake merely, induced her to relieve him.

She resolved, however, as soon as the present difficulty was surmounted, to make another attempt to open the eyes of Mrs. Harrel to the evils which so apparently threatened her, and press her to exert all her influence with her husband, by means both of example and advice, to retrench his expenses, before it should be absolutely too late to save him from ruin.

She determined also, at the same time that she applied for the money requisite for this debt, to take up enough for discharging her own bill at the booksellers, and putting in execution her plan of assisting the Hills.

The next morning she arose early, and, attended by her servant, set out for the house of Mr. Briggs, purposing, as the weather was clear and frosty, to walk through Oxford-Road, and then put herself into a chair; and

hoping to return to Mr. Harrel's by the usual hour of breakfast.

She had not proceeded far, before she saw a mob gathering, and the windows of almost all the houses filling with spectators. She desired her servant to enquire what this meant, and was informed that the people were assembling to see some malefactors pass by in their way to Tyburn.[1]

Alarmed at this intelligence, from the fear of meeting the unhappy criminals, she hastily turned down the next street, but found that also filling with people, who were running to the scene she was trying to avoid: encircled thus every way, she applied to a maid servant who was standing at the door of a large house, and begged leave to step in till the mob was gone by. The maid immediately consented, and she waited here while she sent her man for a chair.

He soon arrived with one; but just as she returned to the street door, a gentleman, who was hastily entering the house, standing back to let her pass, suddenly exclaimed, "Miss Beverley!" and looking at him, she perceived young Delvile.

"I cannot stop an instant," cried she, running down the steps, "lest the crowd should prevent the chair from going on."

"Will you not first," said he, handing her in, "tell me what news you have heard?"

"News?" repeated she, "No, I have heard none!"

"You will only, then, laugh at me for those officious offers you did so well to reject?"

"I know not what offers you mean!"

"They were indeed superfluous, and therefore I wonder not you have forgotten them. Shall I tell the chairman whither to go?"

[1] "Cecilia" was published a year and a half before criminals were hanged in front of Newgate, instead of at Tyburn. So this is probably the last notice in a standard book of the movement of the hangman's procession from Newgate along the Tyburn Road, now called Oxford Street, to the gallows on the site of Connaught Place in the Edgeware Road. When Tyburn-tree fell out of use, Tyburn Road became Oxford Road in all mouths, as it was already in those of the more polite, and Tyburn Lane, Park Lane, as Tyburn Church had, long before, become St. Mary-la-bonne.

"To Mr. Briggs. But I cannot imagine what you mean."

"To Mr. Briggs," repeated he, "O, live for ever French beads and Bristol stones! fresh offers may perhaps be made there, impertinent, officious, and useless as mine!"

He then told her servant the direction, and, making his bow, went into the house she had just quitted.

Cecilia, extremely amazed by this short, but unintelligible conversation, would again have called upon him to explain his meaning, but found the crowd encreasing so fast, that she could not venture to detain the chair, which with difficulty made its way to the adjoining streets: but her surprise at what had passed so entirely occupied her, that when she stopt at the house of Mr. Briggs, she had almost forgotten what had brought her thither.

The foot-boy, who came to the door, told her that his master was at home, but not well.

She desired he might be acquainted that she wished to speak to him upon business, and would wait upon him again at any hour when he thought he should be able to see her.

The boy returned with an answer that she might call again the next week.

Cecilia, knowing that so long a delay would destroy all the kindness of her intention, determined to write to him for the money, and therefore went into the parlour, and desired to have pen and ink.

The boy, after making her wait some time in a room without any fire, brought her a pen and a little ink in a broken tea cup, saying, "Master begs you won't spirt it about, for he's got no more; and all our blacking's as good as gone."

"Blacking?" repeated Cecilia.

"Yes, miss; when master's shoes are blacked, we commonly gets a little drap of fresh ink."

Cecilia promised to be careful, but desired him to fetch her a sheet of paper.

"Law, miss," cried the boy, with a grin, "I dare say master'd as soon give you a bit of his nose! howsever I'll go ax."

In a few minutes he again returned, and brought in his

hand a slate and a pencil; "Miss," cried he, "master says how you may write upon this, for he supposes you've no great matters to say."

Cecilia, much astonished at this extreme parsimony, was obliged to consent, but as the point of the pencil was very blunt, desired the boy to get her a knife, that she might cut it. He obeyed, but said, "Pray, miss, take care it ben't known, for master don't do such a thing once in a year, and if he know'd I'd got you the knife, he'd go nigh to give me a good polt of the head."

Cecilia then wrote upon the slate her desire to be informed in what manner she should send him her receipt for £600, which she begged to have instantly advanced.

The boy came back grinning, and holding up his hands, and said, "Miss, there's a fine piece of work up stairs! Master's in a peck of troubles; but he says how he'll come down, if you'll stay till he's got his things on."

"Does he keep his bed, then? I hope I have not made him rise?"

"No, miss, he don't keep his bed, only he must get ready, for he wears no great matters of clothes when he's alone. You are to know, miss," lowering his voice, "that that day as he went abroad with our sweep's clothes on, he comed home in sich a pickle you never see! I believe somebody'd knocked him in the kennel; so does Moll; but don't you say as I teld you! He's been special bad ever since. Moll and I was as glad as could be, because he's so plaguy sharp; for, to let you know, miss, he's so near, it's partly a wonder how he lives at all: and yet he's worth a power of money, too."

"Well, well," said Cecilia, not very desirous to encourage his forwardness, "If I want anything, I'll call for you."

The boy, however, glad to tell his tale, went on.

"Our Moll won't stay with him above a week longer, miss, because she says how she can't get nothing to eat, but just some old stinking salt meat, that's stayed in the butcher's shop so long it would make a horse sick to look at it. But Moll's pretty nice; howsever, miss, to let you know, we don't get a good meal so often as once a quarter! why this last week we han't had nothing at all

but some dry musty red herrings; so you may think, miss, we're kept pretty sharp!"

He was now interrupted by hearing Mr. Briggs coming down the stairs, upon which, abruptly breaking off his complaints, he held up his finger to his nose in token of secresy, and ran hastily into the kitchen.

The appearance of Mr. Briggs was by no means rendered more attractive by illness and negligence of dress. He had on a flannel gown and night cap; his black beard, of many days growth, was long and grim, and upon his nose and one of his cheeks was a large patch of brown paper, which, as he entered the room, he held on with both his hands.

Cecilia made many apologies for having disturbed him, and some civil enquiries concerning his health.

"Ay, ay," cried he, pettishly, "bad enough; all along of that trumpery masquerade; wish I had not gone! Fool for my pains."

"When were you taken ill, sir?"

"Met with an accident; got a fall, broke my head, like to have lost my wig. Wish the masquerade at old Nick! thought it would cost nothing, or would not have gone. Warrant sha'n't get me so soon to another!"

"Did you fall in going home, sir?"

"Ay, ay, plump in the kennel; could hardly get out of it; felt myself a going, was afraid to tear my clothes, knew the rascal would make me pay for them, so by holding up the old sack, came bolt on my face! off pops my wig; could not tell what to do; all as dark as pitch!"

"Did not you call for help?"

"Nobody by but scrubs, knew they would not help for nothing. Scrawled out as I could, groped about for my wig, found it at last, all soused in the mud; stuck to my head like Turner's cerate."

"I hope, then, you got into a hackney coach?"

"What for? to make things worse? was not bad enough, hay?—must pay two shillings beside?"

"But how did you find yourself when you got home, sir?"

"How? why wet as muck; my head all bumps, my

cheek all cut, my nose big as two! forced to wear a plaister; half ruined in vinegar. Got a great cold: put me in a fever; never been well since."

"But have you had no advice, sir? should not you send for a physician?"

"What to do, hay? fill me with jallop? can get it myself, can't I? Had one once; was taken very bad, thought should have popt off; began to flinch, sent for the doctor, proved nothing but a cheat! cost me a guinea, gave it at fourth visit, and he never came again!——warrant won't have no more?"

Then, perceiving upon the table some dust from the pencil, "What's here?" cried he, angrily, "who's been cutting the pencil? wish they were hanged; suppose it's the boy; deserves to be horse-whipped: give him a good banging."

Cecilia immediately cleared him, by acknowledging she had herself been the culprit.

"Ay, ay," cried he, "thought as much all the time! guessed how it was; nothing but ruin and waste; sending for money, nobody knows why; wanting £600—what to do? throw it in the dirt? Never heard the like! Shan't have it, promise you that," nodding his head, "shan't have no such thing!"

"Shan't have it?" cried Cecilia, much surprised, "why not, sir?"

"Keep it for your husband; get you one soon: won't have no juggling. Don't be in a hurry; one in my eye."

Cecilia then began a very earnest expostulation, assuring him she really wanted the money, for an occasion which would not admit of delay.

Her remonstrances, however, he wholly disregarded, telling her that girls knew nothing of the value of money, and ought not to be trusted with it; that he would not hear of such extravagance, and was resolved not to advance her a penny.

Cecilia was both provoked and confounded by a refusal so unexpected, and as she thought herself bound in honour to Mr. Harrel not to make known the motive of her urgency, she was for some time totally silenced: till recollecting her account with the bookseller, she determined

to rest her plea upon that, persuaded that he could not, at least, deny her money to pay her own bills.

He heard her, however, with the utmost contempt; "Books?" he cried, "what do you want with books? do no good; all lost time; words get no cash."

She informed him his admonitions were now too late, as she had already received them, and must therefore necessarily pay for them.

"No, no," cried he, "send 'em back, that's best; keep no such rubbish, won't turn to account; do better without 'em."

"That, sir, will be impossible, for I have had them some time, and cannot expect the bookseller to take them again."

"Must, must," cried he, "can't help himself; glad to have 'em too. Are but a minor, can't be made pay a farthing."

Cecilia with much indignation heard such fraud recommended, and told him she could by no means consent to follow his advice. But she soon found, to her utter amazement, that he steadily refused to give her any other, or to bestow the slightest attention upon her expostulations, sturdily saying that her uncle had left her a noble estate, and he would take care to see it put in proper hands, by getting her a good and careful husband.

"I have no intention, no wish, sir," cried she, "to break into the income or estate left me by my uncle; on the contrary, I hold them sacred, and think myself bound in conscience never to live beyond them: but the £10,000 bequeathed me by my father, I regard as more peculiarly my own property, and therefore think myself at liberty to dispose of it as I please."

"What," cried he, in a rage, "make it over to a scrubby bookseller! give it up for an old pot-hook? no, no, won't suffer it; sha'n't be, sha'n't be, I say! if you want some books, go to Moorfields,[1] pick up enough at an old stall; get 'em at two-pence a-piece; dear enough too."

[1] Moorfields, a fen now covered by streets, was besides being a muster and a play-ground, a bleaching and drying ground for laundresses, and "second-hand-books were sold under the trees in Moorfields"—"A penny history that hangs upon the rails in Moorfields."—GRAY *to* WHARTON.

Cecilia for some time hoped he was merely indulging his strange and sordid humour, by an opposition that was only intended to tease her; but she soon found herself extremely mistaken; he was immoveable in obstinacy, as he was incorrigible in avarice; he neither troubled himself with enquiries nor reasoning, but was contented with refusing her as a child might be refused, by peremptorily telling her she did not know what she wanted, and therefore should not have what she asked.

And with this answer, after all that she could urge, she was compelled to leave the house, as he complained that his brown paper plaister wanted fresh dipping in vinegar, and he could stay talking no longer.

The disgust with which this behaviour filled her, was doubled by the shame and concern of returning to the Harrels with her promise unperformed. She deliberated upon every method that occurred to her of still endeavouring to serve them, but could suggest nothing, except trying to prevail upon Mr. Delvile to interfere in her favour. She liked not, indeed, the office of solicitation to so haughty a man, but, having no other expedient, her repugnance gave way to her generosity, and she ordered the chairmen to carry her to St. James's-square.

CHAPTER X.

A PERPLEXITY.

AND here, at the door of his father's house, and just ascending the steps, she perceived young Delvile.

"Again!" cried he, handing her out of the chair, "surely some good genius is at work for me this morning!"

She told him she should not have called so early, now she was acquainted with the late hours of Mrs. Delvile, but that she merely meant to speak with his father, for two minutes upon business.

He attended her up stairs: and finding she was in haste, went himself with her message to Mr. Delvile: and soon

returned with an answer that he would wait upon her presently.

The strange speeches he had made to her when they first met in the morning, now recurring to her memory, she determined to have them explained, and in order to lead to the subject, mentioned the disagreeable situation in which he had found her, while she was standing up to avoid the sight of the condemned malefactors.

"Indeed!" cried he, in a tone of voice somewhat incredulous, "and was that the purpose for which you stood up?"

"Certainly, sir;—what other could I have?"

"None, surely!" said he, smiling, "but the accident was singularly opportune."

"Opportune?" cried Cecilia, staring, "how opportune? this is the second time in the same morning that I am not able to understand you?"

"How *should* you understand what is so little intelligible?"

"I see you have some meaning which I cannot fathom, why, else, should it be so extraordinary that I should endeavour to avoid a mob? or how could it be opportune that I should happen to meet with one?"

He laughed at first without making any answer; but perceiving she looked at him with impatience, he, half gaily, half reproachfully, said, "Whence is it that young ladies, even such whose principles are most strict, seem universally, in those affairs where their affections are concerned, to think hypocrisy necessary, and deceit amiable? and hold it graceful to disavow to-day, what they may perhaps mean publicly to acknowledge to-morrow?"

Cecilia, who heard these questions with unfeigned astonishment, looked at him with the utmost eagerness for an explanation.

"Do you so much wonder," he continued, "that I should have hoped in Miss Beverley to have seen some deviation from such rules? and have expected more openness and candour in a young lady who has given so noble a proof of the liberality of her mind and understanding?"

"You amaze me beyond measure!" cried she, "what rules, what candour, what liberality do you mean?"

"Must I speak yet more plainly? and if I do, will you bear to hear me?"

"Indeed I should be extremely glad if you would give me leave to understand you."

"And may I tell you what has charmed me, as well as what I have presumed to wonder at?"

"You may tell me any thing, if you will but be less mysterious."

"Forgive then the frankness you invite, and let me acknowledge to you how greatly I honour the nobleness of your conduct. Surrounded as you are by the opulent and the splendid, unshackled by dependence, unrestrained by authority, blest by nature with all that is attractive, by situation with all that is desirable,—to slight the rich, and disregard the powerful, for the purer pleasure of raising oppressed merit, and giving to desert that wealth in which alone it seemed deficient—how can a spirit so liberal be sufficiently admired, or a choice of so much dignity be too highly extolled?"

"I find," cried Cecilia, "I must forbear any further enquiry, for the more I hear, the less I understand."

"Pardon me, then," cried he, "if here, I return to my first question; whence is it that a young lady, who can think so nobly, and act so disinterestedly, should not be uniformly great, simple in truth, and unaffected in sincerity? Why should she be thus guarded, where frankness would do her so much honour? Why blush in owning what all others may blush in envying?"

"Indeed, you perplex me intolerably;" cried Cecilia, with some vexation, "Why, sir, will you not be more explicit?"

"And why, madam," returned he, with a laugh, "would you tempt me to be more impertinent? have I not said strange things already?"

"Strange indeed," cried she, "for not one of them can I comprehend!"

"Pardon, then," cried he, "and forget them all! I scarce know myself what urged me to say them, but I began inadvertently, without intending to go on, and I have proceeded involuntarily, without knowing how to stop. The fault, however, is ultimately your own, for the sight of you creates an insurmountable desire to converse with you,

and your conversation a propensity equally incorrigible, to take some interest in your welfare."

He would then have changed the discourse, and Cecilia, ashamed of pressing him further, was for some time silent; but when one of the servants came to inform her that his master meant to wait upon her directly, her unwillingness to leave the matter in suspense, induced her, somewhat abruptly, to say, "Perhaps, sir, you are thinking of Mr. Belfield?"

"A happy conjecture!" cried he, "but so wild a one, I cannot but marvel how it should occur to you!"

"Well, sir," said she, "I must acknowledge I now understand your meaning; but with respect to what has given rise to it, I am as much a stranger as ever."

The entrance of Mr. Delvile here closed the conversation.

He began with his usual ostentatious apologies, declaring he had so many people to attend, so many complaints to hear, and so many grievances to redress, that it was impossible for him to wait upon her sooner, and not without difficulty that he waited upon her now.

Meantime, his son almost immediately retired: and Cecilia, instead of listening to this harangue, was only disturbing herself with conjectures upon what had just passed. She saw that young Delvile concluded she was absolutely engaged to Mr. Belfield, and though she was better pleased that any suspicion should fall there than upon Sir Robert Floyer, she was yet both provoked and concerned to be suspected at all. An attack so earnest from almost any other person could hardly have failed being very offensive to her, but in the manners of young Delvile good breeding was so happily blended with frankness, that his freedom seemed merely to result from the openness of his disposition, and even in its very act pleaded its own excuse.

Her reverie was at length interrupted by Mr. Delvile's desiring to know in what he could serve her.

She told him she had present occasion for £600, and hoped he would not object to her taking up that sum.

"Six hundred pounds," said he, after some deliberation, "is rather an extraordinary demand for a young lady in your situation; your allowance is considerable, you have yet no

house, no equipage, no establishment; your expenses, I should imagine, cannot be very great—"

He stopt, and seemed weighing her request.

Cecilia, shocked at appearing extravagant, yet too generous to mention Mr. Harrel, had again recourse to her bookseller's bill, which she told him she was anxious to discharge.

"A bookseller's bill?" cried he; "and do you want £600 for a bookseller's bill?"

"No, sir," said she, stammering, "no,—not all for that, —I have some other—I have a particular occasion——"

"But what bill at all," cried he, with much surprise, "can a young lady have with a bookseller? The Spectator, Tatler, and Guardian, would make library sufficient for any female in the kingdom, nor do I think it like a gentlewoman to have more. Besides, if you ally yourself in such a manner as I shall approve and recommend, you will, in all probability, find already collected more books than there can ever be any possible occasion for you to look into. And let me counsel you to remember, that a lady, whether so called from birth or only from fortune, should never degrade herself by being put on a level with writers, and such sort of people."

Cecilia thanked him for his advice, but confessed that upon the present occasion it came too late, as the books were now actually in her own possession.

"And have you taken," cried he, "such a measure as this without consulting me? I thought I had assured you my opinion was always at your service when you were in any dilemma."

"Yes, sir," answered Cecilia; "but I knew how much you were occupied, and wished to avoid taking up your time."

"I cannot blame your modesty," he replied, "and therefore, as you have contracted the debt, you are, in honour, bound to pay it. Mr. Briggs, however, has the entire management of your fortune, my many avocations obliging me to decline so laborious a trust; apply, therefore, to him, and, as things are situated, I will make no opposition to your demand."

"I have already, sir," said Cecilia, "spoke to Mr. Briggs, but——"

"You went to him first, then?" interrupted Mr. Delvile, with a look of much displeasure.

"I was unwilling, sir, to trouble you till I found it unavoidable." She then acquainted him with Mr. Briggs's refusal, and entreated he would do her the favour to intercede in her behalf, that the money might no longer be denied her.

Every word she spoke, his pride seemed rising to resent, and when she had done, after regarding her some time with apparent indignation, he said, "*I* intercede! *I* become an agent!"

Cecilia, amazed to find him thus violently irritated, made a very earnest apology for her request; but, without paying her any attention, he walked up and down the room, exclaiming, "an agent! and to Mr. Briggs!—This is an affront I could never have expected! why did I degrade myself by accepting this humiliating office! I ought to have known better!" Then, turning to Cecilia, "Child," he added, "for whom is it you take me, and for what?"

Cecilia again, though affronted in her turn, began some protestations of respect; but, haughtily interrupting her, he said, "If of me, and of my rank in life, you judge by Mr. Briggs or by Mr. Harrel, I may be subject to proposals such as these every day; suffer me, therefore, for your better information, to hint to you, that the head of an ancient and honourable house, is apt to think himself somewhat superior to people but just rising from dust and obscurity."

Thunderstruck by this imperious reproof, she could attempt no further vindication; but when he observed her consternation, he was somewhat appeased, and hoping he had now impressed her with a proper sense of his dignity, he more gently said, "You did not, I believe, intend to insult me."

"Good Heaven, sir; no!" cried Cecilia, "nothing was more distant from my thoughts; if my expressions have been faulty, it has been wholly from ignorance."

"Well, well, we will think then no more of it."

She then said she would no longer detain him; and, without daring to again mention her petition, she wished him good morning.

He suffered her to go, yet as she left the room, graciously said, "Think no more of my displeasure, for it is over: I see you were not aware of the extraordinary thing you proposed. I am sorry I cannot possibly assist you; on any other occasion you may depend upon my services: but you know Mr. Briggs, you have seen him yourself—judge, then, how a man of any fashion, is to accommodate himself with such a person!"

Cecilia concurred, and curtsying, took her leave.

"Ah!" thought she, in her way home, "how happy is it for me that I followed the advice of Mr. Monckton! else I had surely made interest to become an inmate of that house, and then indeed, as he wisely foresaw, I should inevitably have been overwhelmed by this pompous insolence. No family, however amiable, could make amends for such a master of it."

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

AN ADMONITION.

THE Harrels and Mr. Arnott waited the return of Cecilia with the utmost impatience; she told them with much concern the failure of her embassy, which Mr. Harrel heard with visible resentment and discontent, while Mr. Arnott, entreating him not to think of it, again made an offer of his services, and declared he would disregard all personal inconvenience for the pleasure of making him and his sister easy.

Cecilia was much mortified that she had not the power to act the same part, and asked Mr. Harrel whether he believed his own influence with Mr. Briggs would be more successful.

"No, no," answered he, "the old curmudgeon would but the rather refuse. I know his reason, and therefore am sure all pleas will be vain. He has dealings in the alley, and I dare say games with your money as if it were his own. There is, indeed, one way——but I do not think you would like it——though I protest I hardly know why not——however, 'tis as well let alone."

Cecilia insisted upon hearing what he meant, and after some hesitation, he hinted that there were means, by which, with very little inconvenience, she might borrow the money.

Cecilia, with that horror natural to all unpractised minds at the first idea of contracting a voluntary debt, started at this suggestion, and seemed very ill disposed to listen to it. Mr. Harrel, perceiving her repugnance, turned to Mr.

Arnott, and said, "Well, my good brother, I hardly know how to suffer you to sell out at such a loss, but yet, my present necessity is so urgent——"

"Don't mention it," cried Mr. Arnott; "I am very sorry I let you know it; be certain however, that while I have any thing, it is yours and my sister's."

The two gentlemen were then retiring together; but Cecilia, shocked for Mr. Arnott, though unmoved by Mr. Harrel, stopt them to enquire what was the way by which it was meant she could borrow the money?

Mr. Harrel seemed averse to answer, but she would not be refused; and then he mentioned a Jew, of whose honesty he had made undoubted trial, and who, as she was so near being of age, would accept very trifling interest for whatever she should like to take up.

The heart of Cecilia recoiled at the very mention of a *Jew*, and *taking up money upon interest;* but impelled strongly by her own generosity to emulate that of Mr. Arnott, she agreed, after some hesitation, to have recourse to this method.

Mr. Harrel then made some faint denials, and Mr. Arnott protested he had a thousand times rather sell out at any discount, than consent to her taking such a measure; but, when her first reluctance was conquered, all that he urged served but to show his worthiness in a stronger light, and only encreased her desire of saving him from such repeated imposition.

Her total ignorance in what manner to transact this business, made her next put it wholly into the hands of Mr. Harrel, whom she begged to take up £600 upon such terms as he thought equitable, and to which, whatever they might be, she would sign her name.

He seemed somewhat surprised at the sum, but without any question or objection undertook the commission: and Cecilia would not lessen it, because unwilling to do more for the security of the luxurious Mr. Harrel, than for the distresses of the laborious Hills.

Nothing could be more speedy than the execution of this affair, Mr. Harrel was diligent and expert, the whole was settled that morning, and, giving to the Jew her bond for the payment at the interest he required, she put into the

hands of Mr. Harrel £350, for which he gave his receipt, and she kept the rest for her own purposes.

She intended the morning after this transaction to settle her account with the bookseller. When she went into the parlour to breakfast, she was somewhat surprised to see Mr. Harrel seated there, in earnest discourse with his wife. Fearful of interrupting a tête à tête so uncommon, she would have retired, but Mr. Harrel, calling after her, said, "O, pray come in! I am only telling Priscilla a piece of my usual ill luck. You must know I happen to be in immediate want of £200, though only for three or four days, and I sent to order honest old Aaron to come hither directly with the money; but it so happens that he went out of town the moment he had done with us yesterday, and will not be back again this week. Now, I don't believe there is another Jew in the kingdom who will let me have money upon the same terms: they are such notorious rascals, that I hate the very thought of employing them."

Cecilia, who could not but understand what this meant, was too much displeased both by his extravagance and his indelicacy, to feel at all inclined to change the destination of the money she had just received; and therefore coolly agreed that it was unfortunate, but added nothing more.

"O, it is provoking indeed," cried he, "for the extra interest I must pay one of those extortioners is absolutely so much money thrown away."

Cecilia, still without noticing these hints, began her breakfast. Mr. Harrel then said he would take his tea with them; and while he was buttering some dry toast, exclaimed, as if from sudden recollection, "O Lord, now I think of it, I believe, Miss Beverley, you can lend me this money yourself for a day or two. The moment old Aaron comes to town, I will pay you."

Cecilia, whose generosity, however extensive, was neither thoughtless nor indiscriminate, found something so repulsive in this gross procedure, that instead of assenting to his request with her usual alacrity, she answered very gravely, that the money she had just received was already appropriated to a particular purpose, and she knew not how to defer making use of it.

Mr. Harrel was extremely chagrined by this reply, which was by no means what he expected; but, tossing down a dish of tea, he began humming an air, and soon recovered his usual unconcern.

In a few minutes, ringing his bell, he desired a servant to go to Mr. Zackery, and inform him that he wanted to speak with him immediately.

"And now," said he, with a look in which vexation seemed struggling with carelessness, "the thing is done! I don't like, indeed, to get into such hands, for 'tis hard ever to get out of them, when once one begins,—and hitherto I have kept pretty clear. But there is no help for it—Mr. Arnott cannot just now assist me—and so the thing must take its course. Priscilla, why do you look so grave?"

"I am thinking how unlucky it is my brother should happen to be unable to lend you this money."

"O, don't think about it; I shall get rid of the man very soon, I dare say; I shall pay him off in a very few days,—I hope so, at least—I am sure I mean it."

Cecilia now grew a little disturbed; she looked at Mrs. Harrel, who seemed also uneasy, and then, with some hesitation, said "Have you really never, sir, employed this man before?"

"Never in my life: never any but old Aaron. I dread the whole race; I have a sort of superstitious notion that if once I get into their clutches, I shall never be my own man again; and that induced me to beg your assistance. However, 'tis no great matter."

She then began to waver; she feared there might be future mischief as well as present inconvenience, in his applying to new usurers, and knowing she had now the power to prevent him, thought herself half cruel in refusing to exert it. She wished to consult Mr. Monckton, but found it necessary to take her measures immediately, as the Jew was already sent for, and must in a few moments be either employed or discarded.

Much perplext how to act, between a desire of doing good, and a fear of encouraging evil, she weighed each side hastily, but while still uncertain which ought to preponderate, her kindness for Mrs. Harrel interfered, and, in the hope of rescuing her husband from further bad practices,

she said she would postpone her own business for the few days he mentioned, rather than see him compelled to open any new account with so dangerous a set of men.

He thanked her in his usual negligent manner, and accepting the £200, gave her his receipt for it, and a promise she should be paid in a week.

Mrs. Harrel, however, seemed more grateful, and with many embraces spoke her sense of this friendly good-nature. Cecilia, happy from believing she had revived in her some spark of sensibility, determined to avail herself of so favourable a symptom, and enter at once upon the disagreeable task she had set herself, of representing to her the danger of her present situation.

As soon, therefore, as breakfast was done, and Mr. Arnott, who came in before it was over, was gone, with a view to excite her attention by raising her curiosity, she begged the favour of a private conference in her own room, upon matters of some importance.

She began with hoping that the friendship in which they had so long lived would make her pardon the liberty she was going to take, and which nothing less than their former intimacy, joined to strong apprehensions for her future welfare, could authorise; "But, oh, Priscilla!" she continued, "with open eyes to see your danger, yet not warn you of it, would be a reserve treacherous in a friend, and cruel even in a fellow-creature."

"What danger?" cried Mrs. Harrel, much alarmed, "do you think me ill? do I look consumptive?"

"Yes, consumptive indeed!" said Cecilia, "but not, I hope, in your constitution."

And then, with all the tenderness in her power, she came to the point, and conjured her without delay to retrench her expenses, and change her thoughtless way of life for one more considerate and domestic.

Mrs. Harrel, with much simplicity, assured her *she did nothing but what everybody else did*, and that it was quite impossible for her to *appear in the world* in any other manner.

"But how are you to appear hereafter?" cried Cecilia, "if now you live beyond your income, you must consider that, in time, your income by such depredations will be exhausted."

"But, I declare to you," answered Mrs. Harrel, "I never run in debt for more than half a year, for as soon as I receive my own money, I generally pay it away every shilling: and so borrow what I want till pay day comes round again."

"And that," said Cecilia, "seems a method expressly devised for keeping you eternally comfortless: pardon me, however, for speaking so openly, but I fear Mr. Harrel himself must be even still less attentive and accurate in his affairs, or he could not so frequently be embarrassed. And what is to be the result? look but, my dear Priscilla, a little forward, and you will tremble at the prospect before you!"

Mrs. Harrel seemed frightened at this speech, and begged to know what she would have them do?

Cecilia then, with equal wisdom and friendliness, proposed a general reform in the household, the public and private expenses of both: she advised that a strict examination might be made into the state of their affairs, that all their bills should be called in, and faithfully paid, and that an entire new plan of life should be adopted, according to the situation of their fortune and income when cleared of all incumbrances.

"Lord, my dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Harrel, with a look of astonishment, "why Mr. Harrel would no more do all this than fly! If I was only to make such a proposal, I dare say he would laugh in my face."

"And why?"

"Why?—why because it would seem such an odd thing—it's what nobody thinks of—though I am sure I am very much obliged to you for mentioning it.—Shall we go down stairs? I think I heard somebody come in."

"No matter who comes in," said Cecilia, "reflect for a moment upon my proposal, and, at least, if you disapprove it, suggest something more eligible."

"O, it's a very good proposal, that I agree," said Mrs. Harrel, looking very weary, "but only the thing is, it's quite impossible."

"Why so? why is it impossible?"

"Why because—dear, I don't know—but I am sure it is."

"But what is your reason? What makes you surè of it?"

"Lord, I can't tell—but I know it is—because—I am very certain it is."

Argument such as this, though extremely fatiguing to the understanding of Cecilia, had yet no power to *blunt her purpose:* she warmly expostulated against the weakness of her defence, strongly represented the imprudence of her conduct, and exhorted her by every tie of justice, honour and discretion to set about a reformation.

"Why, what can I do?" cried Mrs. Harrel, impatiently, "one must live a little like other people. You would not have me be stared at, I suppose; and I am sure I don't know what I do that everybody else does not do too."

"But were it not better," said Cecilia, with more energy, "to think less of *other people*, and more of *yourself?* to consult your own fortune, and your own situation in life, instead of being blindly guided by those of *other people?* If, indeed, *other people* would be responsible for your losses, for the diminution of your wealth, and for the disorder of your affairs, then might you rationally make their way of life the example of yours: but you cannot flatter yourself such will be the case; you know better; your losses, your diminished fortune, your embarrassed circumstances will be all your own! pitied, perhaps, by some, but blamed by more, and assisted by none!"

"Good Lord, Miss Beverley!" cried Mrs. Harrel, starting, "you talk just as if we were ruined!"

"I mean not that," replied Cecilia, "but I would fain, by pointing out your danger, prevail with you to prevent in time so dreadful a catastrophe."

Mrs. Harrel, more affronted than alarmed, heard this answer with much displeasure, and after a sullen hesitation, peevishly said, "I must own I don't take it very kind of you to say such frightful things to me: I am sure we only live like the rest of the world, and I don't see why a man of Mr. Harrel's fortune should live any worse. As to his having now and then a little debt or two, it is nothing but what every body else has. You only think it so odd, because you a'n't used to it: but you are quite mistaken if you suppose he does not mean to pay, for he told me this morning, that as soon as ever he receives his rents, he intends to discharge every bill he has in the world."

"I am very glad to hear it," answered Cecilia, "and I heartily wish he may have the resolution to adhere to his purpose. I feared you would think me impertinent, but you do worse in believing me unkind: friendship and goodwill could alone have induced me to hazard what I have said to you. I must, however, have done; though I cannot forbear adding that I hope what has already passed will sometimes recur to you."

They then separated; Mrs. Harrel half angry at remonstrances she thought only censorious, and Cecilia offended at her pettishness and folly, though grieved at her blindness.

She was soon, however, recompensed for this vexation by a visit from Mrs. Delvile, who, finding her alone, sat with her some time, and by her spirit, understanding and elegance, dissipated all her chagrin.

From another circumstance, also, she received much pleasure, though a little perplexity; Mr. Arnott brought her word that Mr. Belfield, almost quite well, had actually left his lodgings, and was gone into the country.

She now half suspected that the account of his illness given her by young Delvile, was merely the effect of his curiosity to discover her sentiments of him; yet when she considered how foreign to his character appeared every species of artifice, she exculpated him from the design, and concluded that the impatient spirit of Belfield had hurried him away, when really unfit for travelling. She had no means, however, to hear more of him now he had quitted the town, and therefore, though uneasy, she was compelled to be patient.

In the evening she had again a visit from Mr. Monckton, who, though he was now acquainted how much she was at home, had the forbearance to avoid making frequent use of that knowledge, that his attendance might escape observation.

Cecilia, as usual, spoke to him of all her affairs with the utmost openness; and as her mind was now chiefly occupied by her apprehensions for the Harrels, she communicated to him the extravagance of which they were guilty, and hinted at the distress that from time to time it occasioned; but the assistance she had afforded them her own delicacy prevented her mentioning.

Mr. Monckton scrupled not from this account instantly to pronounce Harrel a *ruined man;* and thinking Cecilia, from her connection with him, in much danger of being involved in his future difficulties, he most earnestly exhorted her to suffer no inducement to prevail with her to advance him any money, confidently affirming she would have little chance of being ever repaid.

Cecilia listened to this charge with much alarm, but readily promised future circumspection. She confessed to him the conference she had had in the morning with Mrs. Harrel, and after lamenting her determined neglect of her affairs, she added, "I cannot but own that my esteem for her, even more than my affection, has lessened almost every day since I have been in her house; but this morning, when I ventured to speak to her with earnestness, I found her powers of reasoning so weak, and her infatuation to luxury and expense so strong, that I have ever since felt ashamed of my own want of discernment, in having formerly selected her for my friend."

"When you gave her that title," said Mr. Monckton, "you had little choice in your power; her sweetness and good nature attracted you; childhood is never troubled with foresight, and youth is seldom difficult: she was lively and pleasing, you were generous and affectionate; your acquaintance with her was formed while you were yet too young to know your own worth; your fondness of her grew from habit; and before the inferiority of her parts had weakened your regard, by offending your judgment, her early marriage separated you from her entirely. But now you meet again the scene is altered; three years of absence spent in the cultivation of an understanding naturally of the first order, by encreasing your wisdom, has made you more fastidious; while the same time spent by her in mere idleness and show, has hurt her disposition, without adding to her knowledge, and robbed her of her natural excellencies, without enriching her with acquired ones. You see her now with impartiality, for you see her almost as a stranger, and all those deficiencies which retirement and inexperience had formerly concealed, her vanity, and her superficial acquaintance with the world have now rendered glaring. But folly weakens all bands; remember, therefore, if you

would form a solid friendship, to consult not only the heart but the head, not only the temper, but the understanding."

"Well, then," said Cecilia, "at least it must be confessed I have judiciously chosen *you!*"

"You have, indeed, done me the highest honour," he answered.

They then talked of Belfield; and Mr. Monckton confirmed the account of Mr. Arnott, that he had left London in good health. After which, he enquired if she had seen any thing more of the Delviles?

"Yes," said Cecilia, "Mrs. Delvile called upon me this morning. She is a delightful woman; I am sorry you know her not enough to do her justice."

"Is she civil to you?"

"Civil? she is all kindness!"

"Then depend upon it she has something in view: whenever that is not the case, she is all insolence. And Mr. Delvile—pray what do you think of him?"

"O, I think him insufferable! and I cannot sufficiently thank you for that timely caution which prevented my change of habitation. I would not live under the same roof with him for the world!"

"Well, and do you not now begin also to see the son properly?"

"Properly? I don't understand you."

"Why as the very son of such parents, haughty and impertinent."

"No, indeed; he has not the smallest resemblance of his father, and if he resembles his mother, it is only what every one must wish who impartially sees her."

"You know not that family. But how, indeed, should you, when they are in a combination to prevent your getting that knowledge? They have all their designs upon you, and if you are not carefully upon your guard, you will be the dupe to them."

"What can you possibly mean?"

"Nothing but what every body else must immediately see; they have a great share of pride, and a small one of wealth; you seem by fortune to be flung in their way, and doubtless they mean not to neglect so inviting an opportunity of repairing their estates."

"Indeed you are mistaken; I am certain they have no such intention: on the contrary, they all even teasingly persist in thinking me already engaged elsewhere."

She then gave him a history of their several suspicions. "The impertinence of report," she added, "has so much convinced them that Sir Robert Floyer and Mr. Belfield fought merely as rivals, that I can only clear myself of partiality for one of them, to have it instantly concluded I feel it for the other. And, far from seeming hurt that I appear to be disposed of, Mr. Delvile openly seconds the pretensions of Sir Robert, and his son officiously persuades me that I am already Mr. Belfield's."

"Tricks, nothing but tricks to discover your real situation."

He then gave her some general cautions to be upon her guard against their artifices, and changing the subject, talked, for the rest of his visit, upon matters of general entertainment.

CHAPTER II.

AN EVASION.

CECILIA now for about a fortnight passed her time without incident: the Harrels continued their accustomed dissipation; Sir Robert Floyer, without even seeking a private conference, persevered in his attentions; and Mr. Arnott, though still silent and humble, seemed only to live by the pleasure of beholding her. She spent two whole days with Mrs. Delvile, both of which served to confirm her admiration of that lady and of her son; and she joined the parties of the Harrels, or stayed quietly at home, according to her spirits and inclinations: while she was visited by Mr. Monckton often enough to satisfy him with her proceedings, yet too seldom to betray either to herself or to the world any suspicion of his designs.

Her £200, however, which was to have been returned at the end of the first week, though a fortnight had now elapsed, had not even been mentioned: she began to grow

very impatient, but not knowing what course to pursue, and wanting courage to remind Mr. Harrel of his promise, she still waited the performance of it without speaking.

At this time, preparations were making in the family for removing to Violet Bank to spend the Easter holidays: but Cecilia, who was too much grieved at such perpetual encrease of unnecessary expenses to have any enjoyment in new prospects of entertainment, had at present some business of her own which gave her full employment.

The poor carpenter, whose family she had taken under her protection, was just dead, and, as soon as the last duties had been paid him, she sent for his widow, and after trying to console her for the loss she had suffered, assured her she was immediately ready to fulfil the engagement into which she had entered, of assisting her to undertake some better method of procuring a livelihood; and therefore desired to know in what manner she could serve her, and what she thought herself able to do.

The good woman, pouring forth thanks and praises innumerable, answered that she had a cousin, who had offered, for a certain premium, to take her into partnership in a small haberdasher's shop. "But then, madam," continued she, "it's quite morally impossible I should raise such a sum, or else, to be sure, such a shop as that, now I am grown so poorly, would be quite a heaven upon earth to me: for my strength, madam, is almost all gone away, and when I do any hard work, it's quite a piteous sight to see me, for I am all in a tremble after it, just as if I had an ague, and yet all the time my hands, madam, will be burning like a coal!"

"You have indeed been overworked," said Cecilia, "and it is high time your feeble frame should have some rest. What is the sum your cousin demands?"

"O, madam, more than I should be able to get together in all my life! for earn what I will, it goes as fast as it comes, because there's many mouths, and small pay, and two of the little ones that can't help at all;—and there's no Billy, madam, to work for us now!"

"But tell me, what is the sum?"

"Sixty pound, madam."

"You shall have it," cried the generous Cecilia, "if the situation will make you happy, I will give it you myself."

The poor woman wept her thanks, and was long before she could sufficiently compose herself to answer the further questions of Cecilia, who next enquired what could be done with the children? Mrs. Hill, however, hitherto hopeless of such a provision for herself, had for them formed no plan. She told her, therefore, to go to her cousin, and consult upon this subject, as well as to make preparations for her own removal.

The arrangement of this business now became her favourite occupation. She went herself to the shop, which was a very small one in Fetter-lane, and spoke with Mrs. Roberts, the cousin; who agreed to take the eldest girl, now sixteen years of age, by way of helper; but said she had room for no other: however, upon Cecilia's offering to raise the premium, she consented that the two little children should also live in the house, where they might be under the care of their mother and sister.

There were still two others to be disposed of; but as no immediate method of providing for them occurred to Cecilia, she determined, for the present, to place them in some cheap school, where they might be taught plain work, which could not but prove a useful qualification for whatever sort of business they might hereafter attempt.

Her plan was to bestow upon Mrs. Hill and her children £100 by way of putting them all into a decent way of living; and then, from time to time, to make them such small presents as their future exigencies or changes of situation might require.

Now, therefore, payment from Mr. Harrel became immediately necessary, for she had only £50 of the £600 she had taken up in her own possession, and her customary allowance was already so appropriated that she could make from it no considerable deduction.

There is something in the sight of laborious indigence so affecting and so respectable, that it renders dissipation peculiarly contemptible, and doubles the odium of extravagance; every time Cecilia saw this poor family, her aversion to the conduct and the principles of Mr. Harrel encreased, while her delicacy of shocking or shaming him

diminished, and she soon acquired for them what she had failed to acquire for herself, the spirit and resolution to claim her debt.

One morning, therefore, as he was quitting the breakfast-room, she hastily arose, and following, begged to have a moment's discourse with him. They went together to the library, and after some apologies, and much hesitation, she told him she fancied he had forgotten the £200 which she had lent him.

"The £200," cried he; "O, ay, true!—I protest it had escaped me. Well, but you don't want it immediately?"

"Indeed I do, if you can conveniently spare it."

"O, yes, certainly—without the least doubt.—Though, now I think of it—it's extremely unlucky, but really, just at this time—why did not you put me in mind of it before?"

"I hoped you would have remembered it yourself."

"I could have paid you two days ago extremely well;—however, you shall certainly have it very soon, that you may depend upon, and a day or two can make no great difference to you."

He then wished her good morning, and left her.

Cecilia, very much provoked, regretted that she had ever lent it at all, and determined for the future strictly to follow the advice of Mr. Monckton in trusting him no more.

Two or three days passed on, but still no notice was taken either of the payment or of the debt. She then resolved to renew her application, and be more serious and more urgent with him; but she found, to her utter surprise, this was not in her power, and that though she lived under the same roof with him, she had no opportunity to enforce her claim. Mr. Harrel, whenever she desired to speak with him, protested he was so much hurried he had not a moment to spare: and even, when, tired of his excuses, she pursued him out of the room, he only quickened his speed, smiling, however, and bowing, and calling out "I am vastly sorry, but I am so late now I cannot stop an instant; however, as soon as I come back, I shall be wholly at your command."

When he came back, however, Sir Robert Floyer, or some other gentleman, was sure to be with him, and the

difficulties of obtaining an audience were sure to be encreased. And by this method, which he constantly practised, of avoiding any private conversation, he frustrated all her schemes of remonstrating upon his delay, since her resentment, however great, could never urge her to the indelicacy of dunning him in presence of a third person.

She was now much perplext herself how to put into execution her plan for the Hills: she knew it would be as vain to apply for money to Mr. Briggs, as for payment to Mr. Harrel. Her word, however, had been given, and her word she held sacred: she resolved, therefore, for the present, to bestow upon them the £50 she still retained, and, if the rest should be necessary before she became of age, to spare it, however inconveniently, from her private allowance, which, by the will of her uncle, was £500 a year, £250 of which Mr. Harrel received for her board and accommodations.

Having settled this matter in her own mind, she went to the lodging of Mrs. Hill, in order to conclude the affair. She found her and all her children, except the youngest, hard at work, and their honest industry so much strengthened her compassion, that her wishes for serving them grew every instant more liberal.

Mrs. Hill readily undertook to make her cousin accept half the premium for the present, which would suffice to fix her, with three of her children, in the shop: Cecilia then went with her to Fetter-lane, and there, drawing up herself an agreement for their entering into partnership, she made each of them sign it and take a copy, and kept a third in her own possession: after which, she gave a promissory note to Mrs. Roberts for the rest of the money.

She presented Mrs. Hill, also, with £10 to clothe them all decently, and enable her to send two of the children to school; and assured her that she would herself pay for their board and instruction, till she should be established in her business, and have power to save money for that purpose.

She then put herself into a chair to return home, followed by the prayers and blessings of the whole family.

CHAPTER III.

AN ADVENTURE.

NEVER had the heart of Cecilia felt so light, so gay, so glowing, as after the transaction of this affair: her life had never appeared to her so important, nor her wealth so valuable. To see five helpless children provided for by herself, rescued from the extremes of penury and wretchedness, and put in a way to become useful to society, and comfortable to themselves; to behold their feeble mother, snatched from the hardship of that labour which, over-powering her strength, had almost destroyed her existence, now placed in a situation where a competent maintenance might be earned without fatigue, and the remnant of her days pass in easy employment—to view such sights, and have power to say "*These deeds are mine!*" what, to a disposition fraught with tenderness and benevolence, could give purer self-applause, or more exquisite satisfaction?

Such were the pleasures which regaled the reflections of Cecilia, when, in her way home, having got out of her chair to walk through the upper part of Oxford-Street, she was suddenly met by the old gentleman whose emphatical addresses to her had so much excited her astonishment.

He was passing quick on, but stopping the moment he perceived her, he sternly called out, "Are you proud? are you callous? are you hard of heart so soon?"

"Put me, if you please, to some trial!" cried Cecilia, with the virtuous courage of a self-acquitting conscience.

"I already have!" returned he, indignantly, "and already I have found you faulty!"

"I am sorry to hear it," said the amazed Cecilia; "but at least I hope you will tell me in what?"

"You refused me admittance," he answered, "yet I was your friend, yet I was willing to prolong the term of your genuine tranquillity! I pointed out to you a method of preserving peace with your own soul; I came to you in

behalf of the poor, and instructed you how to merit their prayers; you heard me, you were susceptible, you complied! I meant to have repeated the lesson, to have turned your whole heart to compassion, and to have taught you the sad duties of sympathising humanity. For this purpose I called again, but again I was not admitted! Short was the period of my absence, yet long enough for the completion of your downfall!"

"Good heaven," cried Cecilia, "how dreadful is this language! when have you called, sir? I never heard you had been at the house. Far from refusing you admittance, I wished to see you."

"Indeed?" cried he, with some softness, "and are you, in truth, not proud? not callous? not hard of heart? Follow me, then, and visit the humble and the poor, follow me, and give comfort to the fallen and dejected!"

At this invitation, however desirous to do good, Cecilia started; the strangeness of the inviter, his flightiness, his authoritative manner, and the uncertainty whither or to whom he might carry her, made her fearful of proceeding: yet a benevolent curiosity to see as well as serve the objects of his recommendation, joined to the eagerness of youthful integrity to clear her own character from the aspersion of hard-heartedness, soon conquered her irresolution, and, making a sign to her servant to keep near her, she followed as her conductor led.

He went on silently and solemnly till he came to Swallow-street,[1] then turning into it, he stopt at a small and mean-looking house, knocked at the door, and without asking any question of the man who opened it, beckoned her to come after him, and hastened up some narrow winding stairs.

Cecilia again hesitated; but when she recollected that this old man, though little known, was frequently seen, and though with few people acquainted, was by many personally recognized, she thought it impossible he could mean her any injury. She ordered her servant, however, to come in, and bid him keep walking up and down the

[1] Swallow Street, Piccadilly, is only a small part of a very long street, "of no great account for buildings or inhabitants" (Strype), which ran from Piccadilly to the Tyburn Road (Oxford Street), and is now merged in Regent Street.

stairs till she returned to him. And then she obeyed the directions of her guide.

He proceeded till he came to the second floor, then, again beckoning her to follow him, he opened a door, and entered a small and very meanly furnished apartment.

And here, to her infinite astonishment, she perceived, employed in washing some china, a very lovely young woman, genteelly dressed, and appearing hardly seventeen years of age.

The moment they came in, with evident marks of confusion, she instantly gave over her work, hastily putting the bason she was washing upon the table, and endeavouring to hide the towel with which she was wiping it, behind her chair.

The old gentleman, advancing to her with quickness, said, "How is he now? is he better? will he live?"

"Heaven forbid he should not!" answered the young woman with emotion, "but, indeed, he is no better!"

"Look here," said he, pointing to Cecilia, "I have brought you one who has power to serve you, and to relieve your distress: one who is rolling in affluence, a stranger to ill, a novice in the world;—unskilled in the miseries she is yet to endure, unconscious of the depravity into which she is to sink!—Receive her benefactions while yet she is untainted, satisfied that while she aids you, she is blessing herself!"

The young woman, blushing and abashed, said, "You are very good to me, sir, but there is no occasion—there is no need—I have not any necessity—I am far from being so very much in want.—"

"Poor simple soul!" interrupted the old man, "and art thou ashamed of poverty? Guard, guard thyself from other shames, and the wealthiest may envy thee! Tell here thy story, plainly, roundly, truly; abate nothing of thy indigence, repress nothing of her liberality. The Poor, not impoverished by their own Guilt, are Equals of the Affluent, not enriched by their own Virtue. Come, then, and let me present ye to each other! young as ye both are, with many years and many sorrows to encounter, lighten the burthen of each other's cares, by the heart-soothing exchange of gratitude for beneficence!"

He then took a hand of each, and joining them between his own, "*You*," he continued, "who, though rich, are not hardened, and *you*, who, though poor, are not debased, why should ye not love, why should ye not cherish each other? The afflictions of life are tedious, its joys are evanescent; ye are now both young, and with little to enjoy, will find much to suffer. Ye are both, too, I believe, innocent—Oh, could ye always remain so!—Cherubs were ye then, and the sons of men might worship you!"

He stopt, checked by his own rising emotion; but soon resuming his usual austerity, "Such, however," he continued, "is not the condition of humanity; in pity, therefore, to the evils impending over both, be kind to each other! I leave you together, and to your mutual tenderness I recommend you!"

Then, turning particularly to Cecilia, "Disdain not," he said, "to console the depressed; look upon her without scorn, converse with her without contempt: like you, she is an orphan, though not, like you, an heiress;—like her you are fatherless, though not like her friendless! If *she* is awaited by the temptations of adversity, *you*, also, are surrounded by the corruptions of prosperity. Your fall is most probable, her's most excusable;—commiserate *her*, therefore, now,—by and by she may commiserate *you!*"[1]

And with these words he left the room.

A total silence for some time succeeded his departure: Cecilia found it difficult to recover from the surprise into

[1] "I was startled," said Mr. Cambridge, "at the character at first; but George has got an account of exactly such a man. George shall tell it you." "The man," said Mr. George Cambridge, "is an old half-pay officer. His name, I think, is De la Port; he almost lives in St. James's Park, where he wanders up and down, looking about him for any objects he thinks in distress. He then gives them all the money he can spare, and he begs for them of his friends. He once borrowed a sum of money of Mr. L., from whom I had this account; and, some time after, he paid him half, and said, 'I return you all I spent upon myself,—the rest you will be paid in another place!' He composes prayers for poor and sick people; he wears a very shabby coat, that he may spend no more upon himself than is absolutely necessary; and, in his benevolence and singularity, there is an undoubted mixture of insanity. Mrs. L., when she talked of him to me, said, 'the resemblance to the character of Albany was so very strong, that she thought it must certainly be meant for him,' and desired me to ask Miss

which she had been thrown sufficiently for speech: in following her extraordinary director, her imagination had painted to her a scene such as she had so lately quitted, and prepared her to behold some family in distress, some helpless creature in sickness, or some children in want; but of these to see none, to meet but one person, and that one fair, young, and delicate,—an introduction so singular to an object so unthought of, deprived her of all power but that of showing her amazement.

Meanwhile the young woman looked scarcely less surprised, and infinitely more embarrassed. She surveyed her apartment with vexation, and her guest with confusion; she had listened to the exhortation of the old man with visible uneasiness, and now he was gone, seemed overwhelmed with shame and chagrin.

Cecilia, who in observing these emotions felt both her curiosity and her compassion encrease, pressed her hand as she parted with it, and, when a little recovered, said, "You must think this a strange intrusion; but the gentleman who brought me hither is perhaps so well known to you, as to make his singularities plead with you their own apology."

"No, indeed, madam," she answered bashfully, "he is very little known to me; but he is very good, and very desirous to do me service:—not but what I believe he thinks me much worse off than I really am, for, I assure you, madam, whatever he has said, I am not ill off at all—hardly."

The various doubts to her disadvantage which had at first, from her uncommon situation, arisen in the mind of Cecilia, this anxiety to disguise, not display her distress, considerably removed, since it cleared her of all suspicion of seeking by artifice and imposition to play upon her feelings.

With a gentleness, therefore, the most soothing, she replied, "I should by no means have broken in upon you thus unexpectedly, if I had not concluded my conductor had some right to bring me. However, since we are

Burney if she did not know him. I ventured, however, to immediately answer, I was sure she did not, merely from that circumstance, as I was certain she would not have put him in her book if she had known him."'—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, p. 261, vol. ii.

actually met, let us remember his injunctions, and endeavour not to part, till, by a mutual exchange of good-will, each has added a friend to the other."

"You are condescending indeed, madam," answered the young woman, with an air the most humble, "looking as you look, to talk of a friend when you come to such a place as this! up two pair of stairs! no furniture! no servant! every thing in such disorder!—indeed I wonder at Mr. Albany! he should not——but he thinks every body's affairs may be made public, and does not care what he tells, nor who hears him;—he knows not the pain he gives, nor the mischief he may do."

"I am very much concerned," cried Cecilia, more and more surprised at all she heard, "to find I have been thus instrumental to distressing you. I was ignorant whither I was coming, and followed him, believe me, neither from curiosity nor inclination, but simply because I knew not how to refuse him. He is gone, however, and I will therefore relieve you by going too: but permit me to leave behind me a small testimony that the intention of my coming was not mere impertinence."

She then took out her purse; but the young woman, starting back with a look of resentful mortification, exclaimed, "No, madam! you are quite mistaken; pray put up your purse; I am no beggar! Mr. Albany has misrepresented me, if he has told you I am."

Cecilia, mortified in her turn at this unexpected rejection of an offer she had thought herself invited to make, stood some moments silent; and then said, "I am far from meaning to offend you, and I sincerely beg your pardon if I have misunderstood the charge just now given to me."

"I have nothing to pardon, madam," said she, more calmly, "except, indeed, to Mr. Albany; and to him, 'tis of no use to be angry, for he minds not what I say; he is very good, but he is very strange, for he thinks the whole world made to live in common, and that every one who is poor should ask, and every one who is rich should give: he does not know that there are many who would rather starve."

"And are you," said Cecilia, half-smiling, "of that number?"

"No, indeed, madam! I have not so much greatness of

mind. But those to whom I belong have more fortitude and higher spirit. I wish I could imitate them!"

Struck with the candour and simplicity of this speech, Cecilia now felt a warm desire to serve her, and taking her hand, said, "Forgive me; but though I see you wish me gone, I know not how to leave you: recollect, therefore, the charge that has been given to us both, and if you refuse my assistance one way, point out to me in what other I may offer it."

"You are very kind, madam," she answered, "and I dare say you are very good; I am sure you look so at least. But I want nothing; I do very well, and I have hopes of doing better. Mr. Albany is too impatient. He knows, indeed, that I am not extremely rich, but he is much to blame if he supposes me therefore an object of charity, and thinks me so mean as to receive money from a stranger."

"I am truly sorry," cried Cecilia, "for the error I have committed, but you must suffer me to make my peace with you before we part; yet, till I am better known to you, I am fearful of proposing terms. Perhaps you will permit me to leave you my direction, and do me the favour to call upon me yourself?"

"O no, madam! I have a sick relation whom I cannot leave: and indeed, if he were well, he would not like to have me make an acquaintance while I am in this place."

"I hope you are not his only nurse? I am sure you do not look able to bear such fatigue. Has he a physician? Is he properly attended?"

"No, madam; he has no physician, and no attendance at all."

"And is it possible that in such a situation you can refuse to be assisted? Surely you should accept some help for him, if not for yourself."

"But what will that signify, when, if I do, he will not make use of it? and when he had a thousand and a thousand times rather die, than let any one know he is in want?"

"Take it, then, unknown to him; serve him without acquainting him you serve him. Surely you would not suffer him to perish without aid?"

"Heaven forbid! But what can I do? I am under his command, madam, not he under mine!"

"Is he your father?——Pardon my question, but your youth seems much to want such a protector."

"No, madam, I have no father! I was happier when I had! He is my brother."

"And what is his illness?"

"A fever."

"A fever, and without a physician! Are you sure, too, it is not infectious?"

"O yes, too sure!"

"Too sure? how so?"

"Because I know too well the occasion of it!"

"And what is the occasion?" cried Cecilia, again taking her hand, "pray trust me; indeed you shall not repent your confidence. Your reserve hitherto has only raised you in my esteem, but do not carry it so far as to mortify me by a total rejection of my good offices."

"Ah, madam!" said the young woman, sighing, "you ought to be good, I am sure, for you will draw all out of me by such kindness as this! the occasion was a neglected wound, never properly healed."

"A wound? is he in the army?"

"No,—he was shot through the side in a duel."

"In a duel?" exclaimed Cecilia, "pray what is his name?"

"O, that I must not tell you! his name is a great secret now, while he is in this poor place, for I know he had almost rather never see the light again than have it known."

"Surely, surely," cried Cecilia, with much emotion, "he cannot—I hope he cannot be Mr. Belfield?"

"Ah, heaven!" cried the young woman, screaming, "do you know him?"

Here, in mutual astonishment, they looked at each other.

"You are, then," said Cecilia, "the sister of Mr. Belfield? and Mr. Belfield is thus sick, his wound is not yet healed,—and he is without any help!"

"And who, madam, are *you?*" cried she, "and how is it you know him?"

"My name is Beverley."

"Ah!" exclaimed she again, "I fear I have done nothing but mischief! I know very well who you are now, madam,

but if my brother discovers that I have betrayed him, he will take it very unkind, and perhaps never forgive me."

"Be not alarmed," cried Cecilia; "rest assured he shall never know it. Is he not now in the country?"

"No, madam, he is now in the very next room."

"But what is become of the surgeon who used to attend him, and why does he not still visit him?"

"It is in vain, now, to hide any thing from you; my brother deceived him, and said he was going out of town merely to get rid of him."

"And what could induce him to act so strangely?"

"A reason which you, madam, I hope, will never know, Poverty!—he would not run up a bill he could not pay."

"Good Heaven!—but what can be done for him? he must not be suffered to linger thus; we must contrive some method of relieving and assisting him, whether he will consent or not."

"I fear that will not be possible. One of his friends has already found him out, and has written him the kindest letter! but he would not answer it, and would not see him, and was only fretted and angry."

"Well," said Cecilia, "I will not keep you longer, lest he should be alarmed by your absence. To-morrow morning, with your leave, I will call upon you again, and then I hope you will permit me to make some effort to assist you."

"If it only depended upon me, madam," she answered, "now I have the honour to know who you are, I believe I should not make much scruple; for I was not brought up to notions so high as my brother. Ah! happy had it been for him, for me, for all his family, if he had not had them neither!"

Cecilia then repeated her expressions of comfort and kindness, and took her leave.

This little adventure gave her infinite concern; all the horror which the duel had originally occasioned her, again returned; she accused herself with much bitterness for having brought it on; and finding that Mr. Belfield was so cruelly a sufferer, both in his health and his affairs, she thought it incumbent upon her to relieve him to the utmost of her ability.

His sister, too, had extremely interested her; her youth,

and the uncommon artlessness of her conversation, added to her melancholy situation, and the loveliness of her person, excited in her a desire to serve, and an inclination to love her; and she determined, if she found her as deserving as she seemed engaging, not only to assist her at present, but, if her distresses continued, to receive her into her own house in future.

Again she regretted the undue detention of her £200. What she now had to spare was extremely inadequate to what she now wished to bestow, and she looked forward to the conclusion of her minority with encreasing eagerness. The generous and elegant plan of life she then intended to pursue, daily gained ground in her imagination, and credit in her opinion.

CHAPTER IV.

A MAN OF GENIUS.

THE next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, Cecilia went in a chair to Swallow-street; she enquired for Miss Belfield, and was told to go up stairs: but what was her amazement to meet, just coming out of the room into which she was entering, young Delvile!

They both started, and Cecilia, from the seeming strangeness of her situation, felt a confusion with which she had hitherto been unacquainted. But Delvile, presently recovering from his surprise, said to her, with an expressive smile, "How good is Miss Beverley thus to visit the sick!

[1] For once, Miss Burney may be found drawing from life. "It has been said that from the animated, ingenious, and eccentric Percival Stockdale, she drew the Belfield of her admirable Cecilia." These words are from the pen of Jane Porter, who with her sister, had been kindly encouraged by Stockdale, when the two girls took to writing novels. Stockdale, who had been praised by Gibbon, and Burke, and called "Stockey," in kindness, by Dr. Johnson, met Miss Burney about 1778. In his own opinion, and it seems in that of Miss Burney, he was a "Man of Genius." Grateful Miss Porter also speaks of him as "a man of genius." Against these words of hers, Macaulay scribbled on the margin of his copy of Nichols' "Literary Anecdotes" of the 18th century—"Genius! What had Percival Stockdale to do with genius!"

and how much better might I have had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Belfield, had I but, by prescience, known her design, and deferred my own enquiries till he had been revived by hers!"

And then, bowing and wishing her good morning, he glided past her.

Cecilia, notwithstanding the openness and purity of her intentions, was so much disconcerted by this unexpected meeting, and pointed speech, that she had not the presence of mind to call him back and clear herself; and the various interrogatories and railleries which had already passed between them upon the subject of Mr. Belfield, made her suppose that what he had formerly suspected he would now think confirmed, and conclude that all her assertions of indifference, proceeded merely from that readiness at hypocrisy upon particular subjects, of which he had openly accused her whole sex.

This circumstance and this apprehension took from her for a while all interest in the errand upon which she came; but the benevolence of her heart soon brought it back, when, upon going into the room, she saw her new favourite in tears.

"What is the matter?" cried she, tenderly; "no new affliction I hope has happened? Your brother is not worse?"

"No, madam, he is much the same; I was not then crying for him."

"For what then? tell me, acquaint me with your sorrows, and assure yourself you tell them to a friend."

"I was crying, madam, to find so much goodness in the world, when I thought there was so little! to find I have some chance of being again happy, when I thought I was miserable for ever! Two whole years have I spent in nothing but unhappiness, and I thought there was nothing else to be had; but yesterday, madam, brought me *you*, with every promise of nobleness and protection; and to-day, a friend of my brother's has behaved so generously, that even my brother has listened to him, and almost consented to be obliged to him!"

"And have you already known so much sorrow," said Cecilia, "that this little dawn of prosperity should wholly

overpower your spirits? Gentle, amiable girl! may the future recompense you for the past, and may Mr. Albany's kind wishes be fulfilled in the reciprocation of our comfort and affection!"

They then entered into a conversation which the sweetness of Cecilia, and the gratitude of Miss Belfield soon rendered interesting, friendly and unreserved: and in a very short time, whatever was essential in the story or situation of the latter was fully communicated. She gave, however, a charge the most earnest, that her brother should never be acquainted with the confidence she had made.

Her father, who had been dead only two years, was a linen-draper in the city; he had six daughters, of whom herself was the youngest, and only one son. This son, Mr. Belfield, was alike the darling of his father, mother, and sisters: he was brought up at Eton, no expense was spared in his education, nothing was denied that could make him happy. With an excellent understanding he had uncommon quickness of parts, and his progress in his studies was rapid and honourable: his father, though he always meant him for his successor in his business, heard of his improvement with rapture, often saying, "My boy will be the ornament of the city, he will be the best scholar in any shop in London."

He was soon, however, taught another lesson; when, at the age of sixteen, he returned home, and was placed in the shop, instead of applying his talents, as his father had expected, to trade, he both despised and abhorred the name of it; when serious, treating it with contempt, when gay, with derision.

He was seized, also, with a most ardent desire to finish his education, like those of his school-fellows who left Eton at the same time, at one of the Universities; and, after many difficulties, this petition, at the intercession of his mother, was granted, old Mr. Belfield telling him he hoped a little more learning would give him a little more sense, and that when he became a *finished student*, he would not only know the true value of business, but understand how to get money, and make a bargain, better than any man whatsoever within Temple-Bar.

These expectations, equally short-sighted, were also

equally fallacious with the former: the son again returned, and returned, as his father had hoped, *a finished student;* but, far from being more tractable, or better disposed for application to trade, his aversion to it now was more stubborn, and his opposition more hardy than ever. The young men of fashion with whom he had formed friendships at school, or at the university, and with whom, from the indulgence of his father, he was always able to vie in expense, and from the indulgence of Nature to excel in capacity, earnestly sought the continuance of his acquaintance, and courted and coveted the pleasure of his conversation: but though he was now totally disqualified for any other society, he lost all delight in their favour from the fear they should discover his abode, and sedulously endeavoured to avoid even occasionally meeting them, lest any of his family should at the same time approach him: for of his family, though wealthy, worthy and independent, he was now so utterly ashamed, that the mortification the most cruel he could receive, was to be asked his address, or told he should be visited.

Tired, at length, of evading the enquiries made by some, and forcing faint laughs at the detection made by others, he privately took a lodging at the west end of the town, to which he thenceforward directed all his friends, and where, under various pretences, he contrived to spend the greatest part of his time.

In all his expensive deceits and frolics, his mother was his never-failing confident and assistant; for when she heard that the companions of her son were men of fashion, some born to titles, others destined to high stations, she concluded he was in the certain road to honour and profit, and frequently distressed herself, without ever repining, in order to enable him to preserve upon equal terms, connections which she believed so conducive to his future grandeur.

In this wild and unsettled manner he passed some time, struggling incessantly against the authority of his father, privately abetted by his mother, and constantly aided and admired by his sisters: till, sick of so desultory a way of life, he entered himself a volunteer in the army.

How soon he grew tired of this change has already been

related,[1] as well as his reconciliation with his father, and his becoming a student at the Temple; for the father now grew as weary of opposing, as the young man of being opposed.

Here, for two or three years, he lived in happiness uninterrupted: he extended his acquaintance among the great, by whom he was no sooner known than caressed and admired, and he frequently visited his family, which, though he blushed to own in public, he affectionately loved in private. His profession, indeed, was but little in his thoughts, successive engagements occupying almost all his hours. Delighted with the favour of the world, and charmed to find his presence seemed the signal for entertainment, he soon forgot the uncertainty of his fortune, and the inferiority of his rank: the law grew more and more fatiguing, pleasure became more and more alluring, and, by degrees, he had not a day unappropriated to some party or amusement; voluntarily consigning the few leisure moments his gay circle afforded him, to the indulgence of his fancy in some hasty compositions in verse, which were handed about in manuscript, and which contributed to keep him in fashion.

Such was his situation at the death of his father; a new scene was then opened to him, and for some time he hesitated what course to pursue.

Old Mr. Belfield, though he lived in great affluence, left not behind him any considerable fortune, after the portions of his daughters, to each of whom he bequeathed £2000, had been deducted from it. But his stock in trade was great, and his business was prosperous and lucrative.

His son, however, did not merely want application and fortitude to become his successor, but skill and knowledge; his deliberation, therefore, was hasty, and his resolution improvident. He determined to continue at the Temple himself, while the shop, which he could by no means afford to relinquish, should be kept up by another name, and the business of it be transacted by an agent; hoping thus to secure and enjoy its emoluments, without either the trouble or the humiliation of attendance.

[1] See pp. 7, 8.

But this scheme, like most others that have their basis in vanity, ended in nothing but mortification and disappointment. The shop which under old Mr. Belfield had been flourishing and successful, and enriched himself and all his family, could now scarce support the expenses of an individual. Without a master, without that diligent attention to its prosperity which the interest of possession alone can give, and the authority of a principal alone can enforce, it quickly lost its fame for the excellence of its goods, and, soon after, its customers, from the report of its declension. The produce, therefore, diminished every month; he was surprised, he was provoked; he was convinced he was cheated, and that his affairs were neglected; but though he threatened from time to time to enquire into the real state of the business, and investigate the cause of its decay, he felt himself inadequate to the task; and now first lamented that early contempt of trade, which, by preventing him acquiring some knowledge of it while he had youth and opportunity, made him now ignorant what redress to seek; though certain of imposition and injury.

But yet, however disturbed by alarming suggestions in his hours of retirement, no alteration was made in the general course of his life; he was still the darling of his friends, and the leader in all parties, and still, though his income was lessened, his expenses encreased.

Such were his circumstances at the time Cecilia first saw him at the house of Mr. Monckton: from which, two days after her arrival in town, he was himself summoned, by an information that his agent had suddenly left the kingdom.

The fatal consequence of this fraudulent elopement was immediate bankruptcy.

His spirits, however, did not yet fail him; as he had never been the nominal master of the shop, he escaped all dishonour from its ruin, and was satisfied to consign what remained to the mercy of the creditors, so that his own name should not appear in the Gazette.

Three of his sisters were already extremely well married to reputable tradesmen; the two elder of those who were yet single were settled with two of those who were married, and Henrietta, the youngest, resided with her mother, who

had a comfortable annuity, and a small house at Paddington.[1]

Bereft thus through vanity and imprudence of all the long labours of his father, he was now compelled to think seriously of some actual method of maintenance; since his mother, though willing to sacrifice to him even the nourishment which sustained her, could do for him but little, and that little he had too much justice to accept. The law, even to the most diligent and successful, is extremely slow of profit, and whatever, from his connections and abilities, might be hoped hereafter, at present required an expense which he was no longer able to support.

It remained then to try his influence with his friends among the great and the powerful.

His canvass proved extremely honourable; every one promised something, and all seemed delighted to have an opportunity of serving him.

Pleased with finding the world so much better than report had made it, he now saw the conclusion of his difficulties in the prospect of a place at court.

Belfield, with half the penetration with which he was gifted, would have seen in any other man the delusive idleness of expectations no better founded; but though discernment teaches us the folly of others, experience singly can teach us our own! He flattered himself that his friends had been more wisely selected than the friends of those who, in similar circumstances, had been beguiled; and he suspected not the fraud of his vanity, till he found his invitations daily slacken, and that his time was at his own command.

All his hopes now rested upon one friend and patron, Mr. Floyer, and uncle of Sir Robert Floyer, a man of power in the royal household, with whom he had lived in great intimacy, and who at this period had the disposal of a place which he solicited. The only obstacle that seemed in his way was from Sir Robert himself, who warmly exerted his interest in favour of a friend of his own. Mr. Floyer,

[1] Paddington, "a village at the west end of London, containing, in 1795, about 340 houses."—

"Pitt is to Addington
As London is to Paddington."

CANNING.

—*From* CUNNINGHAM'S *Handbook for London.*

however, assured Belfield of the preference, and only begged his patience till he could find some opportunity of appeasing his nephew.

And this was the state of his affairs at the time of his quarrel at the Opera-house. Already declared opponents of each other, Sir Robert felt double wrath that for *him* Cecilia should reject his civilities; while Belfield, suspecting he presumed upon his known dependence on his uncle to affront him, felt also double indignation at the haughtiness of his behaviour. And thus, slight as seemed to the world the cause of their contest, each had private motives of animosity that served to stimulate revenge.

The very day after this duel, Mr. Floyer wrote him word that he was now obliged in common decency to take the part of his nephew, and therefore had already given the place to the friend he had recommended.

This was the termination of his hopes, and the signal of his ruin! To the pain of his wound he became insensible, from the superior pain of this unexpected miscarriage; yet his pride still enabled him to disguise his distress, and to see all the friends whom this accident induced to seek him, while from the sprightliness he forced in order to conceal his anguish, he appeared to them more lively and more entertaining than ever.

But these efforts, when left to himself and to nature, only sunk him the deeper in sadness; he found an immediate change in his way of life was necessary, yet could not brook to make it in sight of those with whom he had so long lived in all the brilliancy of equality. A high principle of honour which still, in the midst of his gay career, had remained uncorrupted, had scrupulously guarded him from running in debt, and therefore, though of little possessed, that little was strictly his own. He now published that he was going out of town for the benefit of purer air, discharged his surgeon, took a gay leave of his friends, and trusting no one with his secret but his servant, was privately conveyed to mean and cheap lodgings in Swallow-street.

Here, shut up from every human being he had formerly known, he purposed to remain till he grew better, and then again to seek his fortune in the army.

His present situation, however, was little calculated to contribute to his recovery; the dismission of the surgeon, the precipitation of his removal, the inconveniences of his lodgings, and the unseasonable deprivation of long customary indulgences, were unavoidable delays of his amendment; while the mortification of his present disgrace, and the bitterness of his late disappointment, preyed incessantly upon his mind, robbed him of rest, heightened his fever, and reduced him by degrees to a state so low and dangerous, that his servant, alarmed for his life, secretly acquainted his mother with his illness and retreat.

The mother, almost distracted by this intelligence, instantly, with her daughter, flew to his lodgings. She wished to have taken him immediately to her house at Paddington; but he had suffered so much from his first removal, that he would not consent to another. She would then have called in a physician, but he refused even to see one; and she had too long given way to all his desires and opinions, to have now the force of mind for exerting the requisite authority of issuing her orders without consulting him.

She begged, she pleaded, indeed, and Henrietta joined in her entreaties; but sickness and vexation had not rendered him tame, though they had made him sullen: he resisted their prayers, and commonly silenced them by assurances that their opposition to the plan he had determined to pursue, only inflamed his fever, and retarded his recovery.

The motive of an obduracy so cruel to his friends was the fear of a detection which he thought not merely prejudicial to his affairs, but dishonourable to his character: for, without betraying any symptom of his distress, he had taken a general leave of his acquaintance, upon pretence of going out of town, and he could ill endure to make a discovery which would at once proclaim his degradation and his deceit.

Mr. Albany had accidentally broken in upon him, by mistaking his room for that of another sick person in the same house, to whom his visit had been intended; but as he knew and reverenced that old gentleman, he did not much repine at his intrusion. He was not so easy when the same discovery was made by young Delvile, who chancing to meet his servant in the street, enquired concerning his

master's health, and surprising from him its real state, followed him home; where, soon certain of the change in his affairs by the change of his habitation, he wrote him a letter, in which, after apologizing for his freedom, he warmly declared that nothing could make him so happy as being favoured with his commands, if, either through himself or his friends, he could be so fortunate as to do him any service.

Belfield, deeply mortified at this detection of his situation, returned only a verbal answer of cold thanks, and desired he would not speak of his being in town, as he was not well enough to be seen.

This reply gave almost equal mortification to young Delvile, who continued, however, to call at the door with enquiries how he went on, though he made no further attempt to see him.

Belfield, softened at length by the kindness of this conduct, determined to admit him; and he was just come from paying his first visit, when he was met by Cecilia upon the stairs.

His stay with him had been short, and he had taken no notice either of his change of abode, or his pretence of going into the country; he had talked to him only in general terms, and upon general subjects, till he arose to depart, and then he re-urged his offers of service with so much openness and warmth, that Belfield, affected by his earnestness, promised he would soon see him again, and intimated to his delighted mother and sister, that he would frankly consult with him upon his affairs.

Such was the tale which, with various minuter circumstances, Miss Belfield communicated to Cecilia. "My mother," she added, "who never quits him, knows that you are here, madam, for she heard me talking with somebody yesterday, and she made me tell her all that had passed, and that you said you would come again this morning."

Cecilia returned many acknowledgments for this artless and unreserved communication, but could not, when it was over, forbear enquiring by what early misery she had already, though so very young, spent *two years in nothing but unhappiness?*

"Because," she answered, "when my poor father died all

our family separated, and I left everybody to go and live with my mother at Paddington; and I was never a favourite with my mother,—no more, indeed, was anybody but my brother, for she thinks all the rest of the world only made for his sake. So she used to deny both herself and me almost common necessaries, in order to save up money to make him presents: though, if he had known how it was done, he would only have been angry instead of taking them. However, I should have regarded nothing that had but been for his benefit, for I loved him a great deal more than my own convenience; but sums that would distress us for months to save up, would by him be spent in a day, and then thought of no more! Nor was that all——O no! I had much greater uneasiness to suffer; for I was informed by one of my brothers-in-law how ill everything went, and that certain ruin would come to my poor brother from the treachery of his agent; and the thought of this was always preying upon my mind, for I did not dare tell it my mother, for fear it should put her out of humour, for, sometimes, she is not very patient; and it mattered little what any of us said to my brother, for he was too gay and too confident to believe his danger."

"Well, but," said Cecilia, "I hope, now, all will go better; if your brother will consent to see a physician——"

"Ah, madam! that is the thing I fear he never will do, because of being seen in these bad lodgings. I would kneel whole days to prevail with him, but he is unused to control, and knows not how to submit to it; and he has lived so long among the great, that he forgets he was not born as high as themselves. Oh, that he had never quitted his own family! If he had not been spoilt by ambition, he had the best heart and sweetest disposition in the world. But living always with his superiors, taught him to disdain his own relations and be ashamed of us all; and yet now, in the hour of his distress——who else comes to help him?"

Cecilia then enquired if she wanted not assistance for herself and her mother, observing that they did not seem to have all the conveniences to which they were entitled.

"Why, indeed, madam," she replied, with an ingenuous smile, "when you first came here I was a little like my brother, for I was sadly ashamed to let you see how ill we

lived; but now you know the worst, so I shall fret about it no more."

"But this cannot be your usual way of life; I fear the misfortunes of Mr. Belfield have spread a ruin wider than his own."

"No, indeed; he took care from the first not to involve us in his hazards, for he is very generous, madam, and very noble in all his notions, and could behave to us all no better about money matters than he has ever done. But, from the moment we came to this dismal place, and saw his distress, and that *he* was sunk so low who used always to be higher than any of us, we had a sad scene indeed! My poor mother, whose whole delight was to think that he lived like a nobleman, and who always flattered herself that he would rise to be as great as the company he kept, was so distracted with her disappointment, that she would not listen to reason, but immediately discharged both our servants, said she and I should do all the work ourselves, hired this poor room for us to live in, and sent to order a bill to be put upon her house at Paddington, for she said she would never return to it any more."

"But are you, then," cried Cecilia, "without any servant?"

"We have my brother's man, madam, and so he lights our fires, and takes away some of our litters; and there is not much else to be done, except sweeping the rooms, for we eat nothing but cold meat from the cook-shops."

"And how long is this to last?"

"Indeed I cannot tell; for the real truth is, my poor mother has almost lost her senses; and ever since our coming here, she has been so miserable and so complaining, that, indeed, between her and my brother, I have almost lost mine too! For when she found all her hopes at an end, and that her darling son, instead of being rich and powerful, and surrounded by friends and admirers, all trying who should do the most for him, was shut up by himself in this poor little lodging, and instead of gaining more, had spent all he was worth at first, with not a creature to come near him, though ill, though confined, though keeping his bed!—Oh, madam, had you seen my poor mother when she first cast her eyes upon him in that condition!—indeed you could never have forgotten it!"

"I wonder not at her disappointment," cried Cecilia; "with expectations so sanguine, and a son of so much merit, it might well indeed be bitter."

"Yes, and besides the disappointment, she is now continually reproaching herself for always complying with his humours, and assisting him to appear better than the rest of his family, though my father never approved her doing so. But she thought herself so sure of his rising, that she believed we should all thank her for it in the end. And she always used to say that he was born to be a gentleman, and what a grievous thing it would be to have him made a tradesman."

"I hope, at least, she has not the additional misery of seeing him ungrateful for her fondness, however injudicious it may have been?"

"Oh no! he does nothing but comfort and cheer her! and indeed it is very good of him, for he has owned to me in private, that but for her encouragement, he could not have run the course he has run, for he should have been obliged to enter into business, whether he had liked it or not. But my poor mother knows this, though he will not tell it her, and therefore she says that unless he gets well, she will punish herself all the rest of her life, and never go back to her house, and never hire another servant, and never eat any thing but bread, nor drink any thing but water!"

"Poor unhappy woman!" cried Cecilia, "how dearly does she pay for her imprudent and short-sighted indulgence! but surely you are not also to suffer in the same manner?"

"No, madam, not by her fault, for she wants me to go and live with one of my sisters: but I would not quit her for the world; I should think myself wicked indeed to leave her now. Besides, I don't at all repine at the little hardships I go through at present, because my poor brother is in so much distress, that all we save may be really turned to account; but when we lived so hardly only to procure him luxuries he had no right to, I must own I used often to think it unfair, and if I had not loved him dearly, I should not have borne it so well, perhaps, as I ought."

Cecilia now began to think it high time to release her

new acquaintance by quitting her, though she felt herself so much interested in her affairs, that every word she spoke gave her a desire to lengthen the conversation. She ardently wished to make her some present, but was restrained by the fear of offending, or of being again refused; she had, however, devised a private scheme for serving her more effectually than by the donation of a few guineas, and therefore, after earnestly begging to hear from her if she could possibly be of any use, she told her that she should not find her confidence misplaced, and promising again to see her soon reluctantly departed.

CHAPTER V.

AN EXPEDIENT.

THE scheme now projected by Cecilia, was to acquaint the surgeon who had already attended Mr. Belfield with his present situation and address, and to desire him to continue his visits, for the payment of which she would herself be accountable.

The raillery of young Delvile, however, had taught her to fear the constructions of the world, and she therefore purposed to keep both the surgeon and Mr. Belfield ignorant to whom they were indebted. She was aware, indeed, that whatever might be her management, that high-spirited and unfortunate young man would be extremely hurt to find himself thus detected and pursued; but she thought his life too well worth preserving to let it be sacrificed to his pride, and her internal conviction of being herself the immediate cause of its present danger, gave to her an anxious and restless desire to be herself the means of extricating him from it.

Rupil, the name of the surgeon, she had already heard mentioned by Mr. Arnott, and in getting into her chair, she ordered Ralph, her man, to enquire where he lived.

"I know already where he lives, madam," answered Ralph, "for I saw his name over a door in Cavendish-street, Oxford-road; I took particular notice of it, because

it was at the house where you stood up that day on account of the mob that was waiting to see the malefactors go to Tyburn."

This answer unravelled to Cecilia a mystery which had long perplext her; for the speeches of young Delvile when he had surprised her in that situation were now fully explained. In seeing her come out of the surgeon's house, he had naturally concluded she had only entered it to ask news of his patient, Mr. Belfield; her protestations of merely standing up to avoid the crowd, he had only laughed at; and his hints at her reserve and dissimulation, were meant but to reproach her for refusing his offer of procuring her intelligence, at the very time when, to all appearance, she anxiously, though clandestinely, sought it for herself.

This discovery, notwithstanding it relieved her from all suspense of his meaning, gave her much vexation: to be supposed to take an interest so ardent, yet so private, in the affairs of Mr. Belfield, might well authorize all suspicions of her partiality for him: and even if any doubt had yet remained, the unlucky meeting upon the stairs at his lodgings, would not fail to dispel it, and confirm the notion of her secret regard. She hoped, however, to have soon some opportunity of clearing up the mistake, and resolved in the meantime to be studiously cautious in avoiding all appearances that might strengthen it.

No caution, however, and no apprehension, could intimidate her active humanity from putting into immediate execution a plan in which she feared any delay might be fatal; and therefore the moment she got home, she wrote the following note to the surgeon.

"To —— Rupil, Esq.

"*March* 27, 1779.

"A friend of Mr. Belfield begs Mr. Rupil will immediately call upon that gentleman, who is in lodgings about the middle of Swallow-street, and insist upon visiting him till he is perfectly recovered. Mr. Rupil is entreated not to make known this request, nor to receive from Mr. Belfield any return for his attendance; but to attribute the discovery of his residence to accident, and to rest assured he shall be amply recompensed for his time and trouble by

the friend who makes this application, and who is willing to give any security that Mr. Rupil shall think proper to mention, for the performance of this engagement."

Her next difficulty was in what manner to have this note conveyed; to send her own servant was evidently betraying herself, to employ any other was risking a confidence that might be still more dangerous, and she could not trust to the penny-post, as her proposal required an answer. After much deliberation, she at length determined to have recourse to Mrs. Hill, to whose services she was entitled, and upon whose fidelity she could rely.

The morning was already far advanced, but the Harrels dined late, and she would not lose a day where even an hour might be of importance. She went therefore immediately to Mrs. Hill, whom she found already removed into her new habitation in Fetter-lane, and equally busy and happy in the change of scene and of employment. She gave to her a note, which she desired her to carry to Cavendish-street directly, and either to deliver it into Mr. Rupil's own hands, or to bring it back if he was out; but upon no consideration to make known whence or from whom it came.

She then went into the back part of the shop, which by Mrs. Roberts was called the parlour, and amused herself during the absence of her messenger, by playing with the children.

Mrs. Hill at her return said she had found Mr. Rupil at home, and as she refused to give the letter to the servant, she had been taken into a room where he was talking with a gentleman, to whom, as soon as he had read it, he said, with a laugh, "Why here's another person with the same proposal as yours! however, I shall treat you both alike." And then he wrote an answer, which he sealed up, and bid her take care of. This answer was as follows:

"Mr. Rupil will certainly attend Mr. Belfield, whose friends may be satisfied he will do all in his power to recover him, without receiving any recompense but the pleasure of serving a gentleman who is so much beloved."

Cecilia, charmed at this unhoped for success, was making further enquiries into what had passed, when Mrs. Hill, in a low voice, said, "There's the gentleman, madam, who was

with Mr. Rupil when I gave him the letter. I had a notion he was dodging me all the way I came, for I saw him just behind me, turn which way I would."

Cecilia then looked—and perceived young Delvile! who, after stopping a moment at the door, came into the shop, and desired to be shown some gloves, which, among other things, were laid in the window.

Extremely disconcerted at the sight of him, she began now almost to fancy there was some fatality attending her acquaintance with him, since she was always sure of meeting, when she had any reason to wish avoiding him.

As soon as he saw he was observed by her, he bowed with the utmost respect: she coloured in returning the salutation, and prepared, with no little vexation, for another attack, and further raillery, similar to what she had already received from him: but, as soon as he had made his purchase, he bowed to her again, and, without speaking, left the shop.

A silence so unexpected at once astonished and disturbed her; she again desired to hear all that had passed at Mr. Rupil's, and from the relation gathered that Delville had himself undertaken to be responsible for his attendance upon Mr. Belfield.

A liberality so like her own failed not to impress her with the most lively esteem: but this served rather to augment than lessen the pain with which she considered the clandestine appearance she thus repeatedly made to him. She had no doubt he had immediately concluded she was author of the application to the surgeon, and that he followed her messenger merely to ascertain the fact; while his silence when he had made the discovery, she could only attribute to his now believing that her regard for Mr. Belfield was too serious for raillery.

Doubly, however, she rejoiced at the generosity of Mr. Rupil, as it rendered wholly unnecessary her further interference: for she now saw, with some alarm, the danger to which benevolence itself, directed towards a youthful object, might expose her.

CHAPTER VI.

A REMONSTRANCE.

CECILIA returned home so late, that she was summoned to the dining parlour the moment she entered the house. Her morning dress, and her long absence, excited much curiosity in Mrs. Harrel, which a quick succession of questions evasively answered soon made general; and Sir Robert Floyer, turning to her with a look of surprise, said, "If you have such freaks as these, Miss Beverley, I must begin to enquire a little more into your proceedings."

"That, sir," said Cecilia, very coldly, "would ill repay your trouble."

"When we get her to Violet Bank," cried Mr. Harrel, "we shall be able to keep a better watch over her."

"I hope so," answered Sir Robert; "though, faith, she has been so demure, that I never supposed she did any thing but read sermons. However, I find there's no going upon trust with women, any more than with money."

"Ay, Sir Robert," cried Mrs. Harrel, "you know I always advised you not to be quite so easy, and I am sure I really think you deserve a little severity, for not being more afraid."

"Afraid of what, madam?" cried the baronet; "of a young lady's walking out without me? Do you think I wish to be any restraint upon Miss Beverley's time in a morning, while I have the happiness of waiting upon her every afternoon?"

Cecilia was thunderstruck by this speech, which not only expressed an open avowal of his pretensions, but a confident security of his success. She was shocked that a man of such principles should even for a moment presume upon her favour, and irritated at the stubbornness of Mr. Harrel in not acquainting him with her refusal.

His intimation of coming to the house for *the happiness of waiting upon her*, made her determine, without losing a

moment, to seek herself an explanation with him: while the discovery that he was included in the Easter party, which various other concomitant causes had already rendered disagreeable to her, made her look forward to that purposed expedition with nothing but unwillingness and distaste.

But though her earnestness to conclude this affair made her now put herself voluntarily in the way of the baronet, she found her plan always counteracted by Mr. Harrel, who, with an officiousness too obvious to pass for chance, constantly stopt the progress of any discourse in which he did not himself bear a part. A more passionate admirer might not have been so easily defeated; but Sir Robert, too proud for solicitation, and too indolent for assiduity, was very soon checked, because very soon wearied.

The whole evening, therefore, to her infinite mortification, passed away without affording her any opportunity of making known to him his mistake.

Her next effort was to remonstrate with Mr. Harrel himself; but this scheme was not more easy of execution than the other, since Mr. Harrel, suspecting she meant again to dun him for her money, avoided all separate conversation with her so skilfully, that she could not find a moment to make him hear her.

She then resolved to apply to his lady; but here her success was not better. Mrs. Harrel, dreading another lecture upon economy, peevishly answered to her request of a conference, that she was not very well, and could not talk gravely.

Cecilia, justly offended with them all, had now no resource but in Mr. Monckton, whose counsel for effectually dismissing the baronet, she determined to solicit by the first opportunity.

The moment, therefore, that she next saw him, she acquainted him with the speeches of Sir Robert, and the behaviour of Mr. Harrel.

There needed no rhetoric to point out to Mr. Monckton the danger of suffering such expectations, or the impropriety of her present situation: he was struck with both in a manner the most forcible, and spared not for warmth of expression to alarm her delicacy, or add to her displeasure. But chiefly he was exasperated against Mr. Harrel, assuring

her there could be no doubt but that he had some particular interest in so strenuously and artfully supporting the pretensions of Sir Robert. Cecilia endeavoured to refute this opinion, which she regarded as proceeding rather from prejudice than justice; but when she mentioned that the baronet was invited to spend the Easter holidays at Violet Bank, he represented with such energy the consequent constructions of the world, as well as the unavoidable encouragement such intimacy would imply, that he terrified her into an earnest entreaty to suggest to her some way of deliverance.

"There is only one;" answered he, "you must peremptorily refuse to go to Violet Bank yourself. If, after what has passed, you are included in the same party with Sir Robert, you give a sanction yourself to the reports already circulated of your engagements with him: and the effect of such a sanction will be more serious than you can easily imagine, since the knowledge that a connection is believed in the world, frequently, if not generally, leads by imperceptible degrees to its real ratification."

Cecilia, with the utmost alacrity, promised implicitly to follow his advice, whatever might be the opposition of Mr. Harrel. He quitted her, therefore, with unusual satisfaction, happy in his power over her mind, and anticipating with secret rapture the felicity he had in reserve from visiting her during the absence of the family.

As no private interview was necessary for making known her intention of giving up the Easter party, which was to take place in two days time, she mentioned the next morning her design of spending the holidays in town, when Mr. Harrel sauntered into the breakfast room to give some commission to his lady.

At first he only laughed at her plan, gaily rallying her upon her love of solitude; but when he found it was serious, he very warmly opposed it, and called upon Mrs. Harrel to join in his expostulations. That lady complied, but in so faint a manner, that Cecilia soon saw she did not wish to prevail; and, with a concern that cost her infinite pain, now finally perceived that not only all her former affection was subsided into indifference, but that, since she had endeavoured to abridge her amusements, she regarded

her as a spy, and dreaded her as the censor of her conduct.

Meanwhile, Mr. Arnott, who was present, though he interfered not in the debate, waited the event with anxiety; naturally hoping her objections arose from her dislike of Sir Robert, and secretly resolving to be guided himself by her motions.

Cecilia, at length, tired of the importunities of Mr. Harrel, gravely said, that if he desired to hear the reasons which obliged her to refuse his request, she was ready to communicate them.

Mr. Harrel, after a little hesitation, accompanied her into another room.

She then declared her resolution not to live under the same roof with Sir Robert, and very openly expressed her vexation and displeasure that he so evidently persisted in giving that gentleman encouragement.

"My dear Miss Beverley," answered he, carelessly, "when young ladies will not know their own minds, it is necessary some friend should tell it them: you were certainly very favourable to Sir Robert but a short time ago, and so, I dare say, you will be again, when you have seen more of him."

"You amaze me, sir!" cried Cecilia: "when was I favourable to him? Has he not always and regularly been my aversion?"

"I fancy," answered Mr. Harrel, laughing, "you will not easily persuade him to think so; your behaviour at the Opera-house was ill calculated to give him that notion."

"My behaviour at the Opera-house, sir, I have already explained to you; and if Sir Robert himself has any doubts, either from that circumstance or from any other, pardon me if I say they can only be attributed to your unwillingness to remove them. I entreat you, therefore, to trifle with him no longer, nor to subject me again to the freedom of implications extremely disagreeable to me."

"O fie, fie, Miss Beverley! after all that has passed, after his long expectations, and his constant attendance, you cannot for a moment think seriously of discarding him?"

Cecilia, equally surprised and provoked by this speech, could not for a moment tell how to answer it; and Mr. Harrel, wilfully misinterpreting her silence, took her hand,

and said, "Come, I am sure you have too much honour to make a fool of such a man as Sir Robert Floyer. There is not a woman in town who will not envy your choice, and I assure you there is not a man in England I would so soon recommend to you."

He would then have hurried her back to the next room; but, drawing away her hand with undisguised resentment, "No, sir," she cried, "this must not pass! My positive rejection of Sir Robert the instant you communicated to me his proposals, you can neither have forgotten nor mistaken; and you must not wonder if I acknowledge myself extremely disobliged by your unaccountable perseverance in refusing to receive my answer."

"Young ladies who have been brought up in the country," returned Mr. Harrel, with his usual negligence, "are always so high flown in their notions, it is difficult to deal with them; but as I am much better acquainted with the world than you can be, you must give me leave to tell you, that if, after all, you refuse Sir Robert, it will be using him very ill."

"Why will you say so, sir," cried Cecilia, "when it is utterly impossible you can have formed so preposterous an opinion? Pray hear me, however, finally, and pray tell Sir Robert——"

"No, no," interrupted he, with affected gaiety, "you shall manage it all your own way; I will have nothing to do with the quarrels of lovers."

And then, with a pretended laugh, he hastily left her.

Cecilia was so much incensed by this impracticable behaviour, that instead of returning to the family, she went directly to her own room. It was easy for her to see that Mr. Harrel was bent upon using every method he could devise, to entangle her into some engagement with Sir Robert, and though she could not imagine the meaning of such a scheme, the littleness of his behaviour excited her contempt, and the long-continued error of the baronet gave her the utmost uneasiness. She again determined to seek an explanation with him herself, and immovably to refuse joining the party at Violet Bank.

The following day, while the ladies and Mr. Arnott were at breakfast, Mr. Harrel came into the room to enquire if

they should all be ready to set off for his villa by ten o'clock the next day. Mrs. Harrel and her brother answered in the affirmative; but Cecilia was silent, and he turned to her and repeated his question.

"Do you think me so capricious, sir," said she, "that after telling you but yesterday I could not be of your party, I shall tell you to-day that I can?"

"Why, you do not really mean to remain in town by yourself?" replied he, "you cannot suppose that will be an eligible plan for a young lady. On the contrary, it will be so very improper, that I think myself, as your guardian, obliged to oppose it."

Amazed at this authoritative speech, Cecilia looked at him with a mixture of mortification and anger; but knowing it would be vain to resist his power if he was resolute to exert it, she made not any answer.

"Besides," he continued, "I have a plan for some alterations in the house during my absence; and I think your room, in particular, will be much improved by them: but it will be impossible to employ any workmen, if we do not all quit the premises."

This determined persecution now seriously alarmed her; she saw that Mr. Harrel would omit no expedient or stratagem to encourage the addresses of Sir Robert, and force her into his presence; and she began next to apprehend that her connivance in his conduct might be presumed upon by that gentleman: she resolved, therefore, as the last and only effort in her power for avoiding him, to endeavour to find an accommodation at the house of Mrs. Delvile, during the excursion to Violet Bank: and if, when she returned to Portman-square, the baronet still persevered in his attendance, to intreat her friend Mr. Monckton would take upon himself the charge of undeceiving him.

CHAPTER VII.

A VICTORY.

AS not a moment was now to be lost, Cecilia had no sooner suggested this scheme, than she hastened to St. James's-square, to try its practicability.

She found Mrs. Delvile alone, and still at breakfast.

After the first compliments were over, while she was considering in what manner to introduce her proposal, Mrs. Delvile herself led to the subject, by saying, "I am very sorry to hear we are so soon to lose you; but I hope Mr. Harrel does not intend to make any long stay at his villa; for if he does, I shall be half tempted to come and run away with you from him."

"And that," said Cecilia, delighted with this opening, "would be an honour I am *more* than half tempted to desire."

"Why, indeed, your leaving London at this time," continued Mrs. Delville, "is, for me, particularly unfortunate, as, if I could now be favoured with your visits, I should doubly value them; for Mr. Delvile is gone to spend the holidays at the Duke of Derwent's, whither I was not well enough to accompany him; my son has his own engagements, and there are so few people I can bear to see, that I shall live almost entirely alone."

"If I," cried Cecilia, "in such a situation might hope to be admitted, how gladly for that happiness would I exchange my expedition to Violet Bank!"

"You are very good, and very amiable," said Mrs. Delvile, "and your society would, indeed, give me infinite satisfaction. Yet I am no enemy to solitude; on the contrary, company is commonly burthensome to me; I find few who have any power to give me entertainment, and even of those few, the chief part have in their manners, situation, or characters, an unfortunate *something*, that generally renders a near connection with them inconvenient or disagreeable. There are, indeed, so many drawbacks to regard and intimacy, from pride, from propriety,

and various other collateral causes, that rarely as we meet with people of brilliant parts, there is almost ever some objection to our desire of meeting them again. Yet to live wholly alone is cheerless and depressing; and with you, at least," taking Cecilia's hand, "I find not one single obstacle to oppose to a thousand inducements, which invite me to form a friendship that I can only hope may be as lasting, as I am sure it will be pleasant."

Cecilia expressed her sense of this partiality in the warmest terms; and Mrs. Delvile, soon discovering by her manner that she took not any delight in her intended visit to Violet Bank, began next to question her whether it would be possible for her to give it up.

She instantly answered in the affirmative.

"And would you really be so obliging," cried Mrs. Delvile, with some surprise, "as to bestow upon me the time you had destined for this gay excursion?"

"Most willingly," answered Cecilia, "if you are so good as to wish it."

"But can you also——for you must by no means remain alone in Portman-square,——manage to live entirely in my house till Mr. Harrel's return?"

To this proposal, which was what she most desired, Cecilia gave a glad assent; and Mrs. Delvile, extremely pleased with her compliance, promised to have an apartment prepared for her immediately.

She then hastened home, to announce her new plan.

This she took occasion to do when the family was assembled at dinner. The surprize with which she was heard was very general: Sir Robert seemed at a loss what conclusion to draw from her information; Mr. Arnott was half elated with pleasure, and half depressed with apprehension; Mrs. Harrel wondered, without any other sensation; and Mr. Harrel himself was evidently the most concerned of the party.

Every effort of persuasion and importunity he now essayed to prevail upon her to give up this scheme, and still accompany them to the villa; but she coolly answered that her engagement with Mrs. Delvile was decided, and she had appointed to wait upon her the next morning.

When her resolution was found so steady, a general ill-

humour took place of surprise: Sir Robert now had the air of a man who thought himself affronted; Mr. Arnott was wretched from a thousand uncertainties; Mrs. Harrel, indeed, was still the most indifferent; but Mr. Harrel could hardly repress his disappointment and anger.

Cecilia, however, was all gaiety and pleasure: in removing only from the house of one guardian to another, she knew she could not be opposed; and the flattering readiness with which Mrs. Delvile had anticipated her request, without enquiring into her motives, had relieved her from a situation which now grew extremely distressing, without giving to her the pain of making complaints of Mr. Harrel. The absence of Mr. Delvile contributed to her happiness, and she much rejoiced in having now the prospect of a speedy opportunity to explain to his son whatever had appeared mysterious in her conduct respecting Mr. Belfield. If she had anything to regret, it was merely the impossibility, at this time, of waiting for the counsel of Mr. Monckton.

The next morning, while the family was in the midst of preparation for departure, she took leave of Mrs. Harrel, who faintly lamented the loss of her company, and then hastily made her compliments to Mr. Harrel and Mr. Arnott, and putting herself into a chair, was conveyed to her new habitation.

Mrs. Delvile received her with the most distinguished politeness; she conducted her to the apartment which had been prepared for her, led her to the library, which she desired her to make use of as her own, and gave her the most obliging charges to remember that she was in a house of which she had the command.

Young Delvile did not make his appearance till dinner time. Cecilia, from recollecting the strange situations in which she had lately been seen by him, blushed extremely when she first met his eyes; but, finding him gay and easy, general in his conversation, and undesigning in his looks, she soon recovered from her embarrassment, and passed the rest of the day without restraint or uneasiness.

Every hour she spent with Mrs. Delvile, contributed to raise in her esteem the mind and understanding of that lady. She found, indeed, that it was not for nothing she

was accused of pride, but she found at the same time so many excellent qualities, so much true dignity of mind, and so noble a spirit of liberality, that however great was the respect she seemed to demand, it was always inferior to what she felt inclined to pay.

Nor was young Delvile less rapid in the progress he made in her favour; his character, upon every opportunity of showing it, rose in her opinion, and his disposition and manners had a mingled sweetness and vivacity that rendered his society attractive, and his conversation spirited.

Here, therefore, Cecilia experienced that happiness she so long had coveted in vain: her life was neither public nor private, her amusements were neither dissipated nor retired; the company she saw were either people of high rank or strong parts, and their visits were neither frequent nor long. The situation she quitted gave a zest to that into which she entered, for she was now no longer shocked by extravagance or levity, no longer tormented with addresses which disgusted her, nor mortified by the ingratitude of the friend she had endeavoured to serve. All was smooth and serene, yet lively and interesting.

Her plan, however, of clearing to young Delvile his mistakes concerning Belfield, she could not put in execution; for he now never led to the subject, though he was frequently alone with her, nor seemed at all desirous to renew his former raillery, or repeat his enquiries. She wondered at this change in him, but chose rather to wait the revival of his own curiosity, than to distress or perplex herself by contriving methods of explanation.

Situated thus happily, she had now one only anxiety, which was to know whether, and in what manner, Mr. Belfield had received his surgeon, as well as the actual state of his own and his sister's affairs: but the fear of again encountering young Delvile in suspicious circumstances, deterred her at present from going to their house. Yet her natural benevolence, which partial convenience never lulled to sleep, impressing her with an apprehension that her services might be wanted, she was induced to write to Miss Belfield, though she forbore to visit her.

Her letter was short, but kind and to the purpose: she apologized for her officiousness, desired to know if her

brother was better, and entreated her, in terms the most delicate, to acquaint her if yet she would accept from her any assistance.

She sent this letter by her servant, who, after waiting a considerable time, brought her the following answer:

To Miss Beverley.

Ah madam! your goodness quite melts me! we want nothing, however, yet, though I fear we shall not say so much longer. But though I hope I shall never forget myself so as to be proud and impertinent, I will rather struggle with any hardship than beg, for I will not disoblige my poor brother by any fault that I can help, especially now he is fallen so low. But, thank heaven, his wound has at last been dressed, for the surgeon has found him out, and he attends him for nothing; though my brother is willing to part with every thing he is worth in the world, rather than owe that obligation to him: yet I often wonder why he hates so to be obliged, for when he was rich himself he was always doing something to oblige other people. But I fear the surgeon thinks him very bad! for he won't speak to us when we follow him down stairs.

I am sadly ashamed to send this bad writing, but I dare not ask my brother for any help, because he would only be angry that I wrote any thing about him at all; but indeed I have seen too little good come of pride to think of imitating it; and as I have not his genius, I am sure there is no need I should have his defects: ill, therefore, as I write, you, madam, who have so much goodness and gentleness, would forgive it, I believe, if it was worse, almost. And though we are not in need of your kind offers, it is a great comfort to me to think there is a lady in the world that, if we come to be quite destitute, and if the proud heart of my poor unhappy brother should be quite broke down, will look upon our distress with pity, and generously help us from quite sinking under it. I remain,

Madam,

with the most humble respect,

your ever most obliged

humble servant,

Henrietta Belfield.

Cecilia, much moved by the simplicity of this letter, determined that her very first visit from Portman-square should be to its fair and innocent writer. And having now an assurance that she was in no immediate distress, and that her brother was actually under Mr. Rupil's care, she dismissed from her mind the only subject of uneasiness that at present had endeavoured to disturb it, and gave herself wholly up to the delightful serenity of unalloyed happiness.

Few are the days of felicity unmixed which we acknowledge while we experience, though many are those we deplore, when by sorrow taught their value, and by misfortune their loss. Time with Cecilia now glided on with such rapidity, that before she thought the morning half over, the evening was closed, and ere she was sensible the first week was past, the second was departed for ever. More and more pleased with the inmates of her new habitation, she found in the abilities of Mrs. Delvile sources inexhaustible of entertainment, and in the disposition and sentiments of her son something so concordant to her own, that almost every word he spoke showed the sympathy of their minds, and almost every look which caught her eyes was a reciprocation of intelligence. Her heart, deeply wounded of late by unexpected indifference, and undeserved mortification, was now, perhaps, more than usually susceptible of those penetrating and exquisite pleasures which friendship and kindness possess the highest powers of bestowing. Easy, gay, and airy, she only rose to happiness, and only retired to rest; and not merely heightened was her present enjoyment by her past disappointment, but, carrying her retrospection to her earliest remembrance, she still found her actual situation more peculiarly adapted to her taste and temper, than any she had hitherto at any time experienced.

The very morning that the destined fortnight was elapsed, she received a note from Mrs. Harrel, with information of her arrival in town, and an entreaty that she would return to Portman-square.

Cecilia, who, thus happy, had forgot to mark the progress of time, was now all amazement to find the term of her absence so soon past. She thought of going back with

the utmost reluctance, and of quitting her new abode with the most lively regret. The representations of Mr. Monckton daily lost their force, and, notwithstanding her dislike of Mr. Delvile, she had no wish so earnest as that of being settled in his family for the rest of her minority.

To effect this was her next thought; yet she knew not how to make the proposal; but from the uncommon partiality of Mrs. Delvile, she hoped, with a very little encouragement, she would lead to it herself.

Here, however, she was disappointed; Mrs. Delvile, when she heard of the summons from the Harrels, expressed her sorrow at losing her in terms of the most flattering regret, yet seemed to think the parting indispensable, and dropt not the most distant hint of attempting to prevent it.

Cecilia, vexed and disconcerted, then made arrangements for her departure, which she fixed for the next morning.

The rest of this day, unlike every other which for the last fortnight had preceded it, was passed with little appearance, and no reality of satisfaction: Mrs. Delvile was evidently concerned, her son openly avowed his chagrin, and Cecilia felt the utmost mortification; yet, though every one was discontented, no effort was made towards obtaining any delay.

The next morning during breakfast, Mrs. Delvile very elegantly thanked her for granting to her so much of her time, and earnestly begged to see her in future whenever she could be spared from her other friends; protesting she was now so accustomed to her society, that she should require both long and frequent visits to soften the separation. This request was very eagerly seconded by young Delvile, who warmly spoke his satisfaction that his mother had found so charming a friend, and unaffectedly joined in her entreaties that the intimacy might be still more closely cemented.

Cecilia had no great difficulty in according her compliance to those demands, of which the kindness and cordiality somewhat lessened her disturbance at the parting.

When Mrs. Harrel's carriage arrived, Mrs. Delvile took a most affectionate leave of her, and her son attended her to the coach.

In her way down stairs, he stopt her for a few moments, and in some confusion said, "I wish much to apologize to Miss Beverley, before her departure, for the very gross mistake of which I have been guilty. I know not if it is possible she can pardon me, and I hardly know myself by what perversity and blindness I persisted so long in my error."

"O," cried Cecilia, much rejoiced at this voluntary explanation, "if you are but convinced you were really in an error, I have nothing more to wish. Appearances, indeed, were so strangely against me, that I ought not, perhaps, to wonder they deceived you."

"This is being candid indeed," answered he, again leading her on: "and in truth, though your anxiety was obvious, its cause was obscure, and where anything is left to conjecture, opinion interferes, and the judgment is easily warped. My own partiality, however, for Mr. Belfield, will I hope plead my excuse, as from that, and not from any prejudice against the baronet, my mistake arose: on the contrary, so highly I respect your taste and your discernment, that your approbation, when known, can scarcely fail of securing mine."

Great as was the astonishment of Cecilia at the conclusion of this speech; she was at the coach door before she could make any answer; but Delvile, perceiving her surprise, added, while he handed her in, "Is it possible——? but no, it is *not* possible I should be again mistaken. I forbore to speak at all, till I had information by which I could not be misled."

"I know not in what unaccountable obscurity," cried Cecilia, "I, or my affairs, may be involved, but I perceive that the cloud which I had hoped was dissipated, is thicker and more impenetrable than ever."

Delvile then bowed to her with a look that accused her of insincerity, and the carriage drove away.

Teased by these eternal mistakes, and provoked to find that though the object of her supposed partiality was so frequently changed, the notion of her positive engagement with one of the duellists was invariable, she resolved, with all the speed in her power, to commission Mr. Monckton to wait upon Sir Robert Floyer, and in her own name give

a formal rejection to his proposals, and desire him thenceforward to make known, by every opportunity, their total independence of each other: for sick of debating with Mr. Harrel, and detesting all intercourse with Sir Robert, she now dropt her design of seeking an explanation herself.

She was received by Mrs. Harrel with the same coldness with which she had parted from her. That lady appeared now to have some uneasiness upon her mind, and Cecilia endeavoured to draw from her its cause; but far from seeking any alleviation in friendship, she studiously avoided her, seeming pained by her conversation, and reproached by her sight. Cecilia perceived this encreasing reserve with much concern, but with more indignation, conscious that her good offices had merited a better reception, and angry to find that her advice had not merely failed of success, but even exposed her to aversion.

Mr. Harrel, on the contrary, behaved to her with unusual civility, seemed eager to oblige her, and desirous to render his house more agreeable to her than ever. But in this he did not prosper; for Cecilia, immediately upon her return, looking in her apartment for the projected alterations, and finding none had been made, was so disgusted by such a detection of duplicity, that he sunk yet lower than before in her opinion, and she repined at the necessity she was under of any longer continuing his guest.

The joy of Mr. Arnott at again seeing her, was visible and sincere; and not a little was it encreased by finding that Cecilia, who sought not more to avoid Mr. Harrel and Sir Robert, than she was herself avoided by Mrs. Harrel, talked with pleasure to nobody else in the house, and scarcely attempted to conceal that he was the only one of the family who possessed any portion of her esteem.

Even Sir Robert appeared now to have formed a design of paying her rather more respect than he had hitherto thought necessary; but the violence he did himself was so evident, and his imperious nature seemed so repugnant to the task, that his insolence, breaking forth by starts, and checked only by compulsion, was but the more conspicuous from his inadequate efforts to disguise it.

CHAPTER VIII.

A COMPLAINT.

AS Cecilia now found herself cleared, at least, of all suspicions of harbouring too tender a regard for Mr. Belfield, her objections to visiting his sister were removed, and the morning after her return to Mr. Harrel's, she went in a chair to Swallow-street.

She sent her servant up stairs to enquire if she might be admitted, and was immediately taken into the room where she had twice before been received.

In a few minutes Miss Belfield, softly opening and shutting the door of the next apartment, made her appearance. She looked thin and pale, but much gratified by the sight of Cecilia. "Ah madam!" she cried, "you are good indeed not to forget us! and you can little think how it cheers and consoles me, that such a lady as you can condescend to be kind to me. It is quite the only pleasure that I have now in the whole world."

"I grieve that you have no greater;" cried Cecilia, "you seem much fatigued and harassed. How is your brother? I fear you neglect your own health, by too much attention to his."

"No, indeed, madam; my mother does everything for him herself, and hardly suffers anybody else to go near him."

"What, then, makes you so melancholy?" said Cecilia, taking her hand; "you do not look well; your anxiety, I am sure, is too much for your strength."

"How should I look well, madam," answered she, "living as I live? however, I will not talk of myself, but of my brother.——O, he is so ill! indeed I am sadly, sadly afraid he will never be well again!"

"What does his surgeon say? you are too tender, and too much frightened to be any judge."

"It is not that I think myself he will die of his wound, for Mr. Rupil says the wound is almost nothing; but he is in a constant fever, and so thin, and so weak, that indeed it is almost impossible he should recover!"

"You are too apprehensive," said Cecilia; "you know not what effect the country air may have upon him; there are many, many expedients that with so young a man may yet be successful."

"O no, the country air can do nothing for him! for I will not deceive you, madam, for that would be doubly a fault when I am so ready in blaming other people for wearing false appearances: besides you are so good and so gentle, that it quite composes me to talk with you. So I will honestly speak the truth, and the whole truth at once; my poor brother is lost—O, I fear for ever lost!—all by his own unhappy pride! he forgets his father was a tradesman, he is ashamed of all his family, and his whole desire is to live among the grandest people, as if he belonged to no other. And now that he can no longer do that, he takes the disappointment so to heart that he cannot get the better of it; and he told me this morning that he wished he was dead, for he did not know why he should live only to see his own ruin! But when he saw how I cried at his saying so, he was very sorry indeed, for he has always been the kindest brother in the world, when he has been away from the great folks who have spoilt him: 'But why,' said he, 'Henrietta, why would you have me live, when instead of raising you and my poor mother into a higher station, I am sunk so low, that I only help to consume your own poor pittances to support me in my disgrace?'"

"I am sorry, indeed," said Cecilia, "to find he has so deep a sense of the failure of his expectations: but how happens it that *you* are so much wiser? Young and inexperienced as you are, and early as you must have been accustomed, from your mother as well as from Mr. Belfield, to far other doctrine, the clearness of your judgment, and the justness of your remarks, astonish as much as they charm me."

"Ah, madam! brought up as I have been brought up, there is little wonder I should see the danger of a high education, let me be ever so ignorant of everything else; for I, and all my sisters, have been the sufferers the whole time: and while we were kept backward that he might be brought forward, while we were denied comforts, that he might have luxuries, how could we help seeing the evil of so much vanity, and wishing we had all been brought up

according to our proper station, instead of living in continual inconvenience, and having one part of a family struggling with distress, only to let another part of it appear in a way he had no right to?"

"How rationally," said Cecilia, "have you considered this subject! and how much do I honour you for the affection you retain for your brother, notwithstanding the wrongs you have suffered to promote his elevation!"

"Indeed, he deserves it; take but from him that one fault, pride, and I believe he has not another: and humoured and darling child as from his infancy he has always been, who at that can wonder, or be angry?"

"And has he still no plan, no scheme for his future destination?"

"No, madam, none at all; and that it is makes him so miserable, and being so miserable makes him so ill; for Mr. Rupil says that with such uneasiness upon his mind, he can never, in his present low state, get well. O, it is melancholy to see how he is altered! and how he has lost all his fine spirits! he that used to be the life of us all!—And now he hardly ever speaks a word, or if he does, he says something so sorrowful that it cuts us to the soul! But, yesterday, when my mother and I thought he was asleep, he lifted up his head, and looked at us both with the tears in his eyes, which almost broke our hearts to see, and then, in a low voice, he said, 'what a lingering illness is this! Ah, my dear mother, you and poor Henrietta ought to wish it quicker over! for should I recover, my life, hereafter, will but linger like this illness.' And afterwards he called out, 'What on earth is to become of me? I shall never have health for the army, nor interest, nor means; what am I to do? subsist in the very prime of my life upon the bounty of a widowed mother? or, with such an education, such connections as mine, enter at last into some mean and sordid business?'"

"It seems then," said Cecilia, "he now less wants a physician than a friend."

"He has a friend, madam, a noble friend, would he but accept his services; but he never sees him without suffering fresh vexation, and his fever encreases after every visit he pays him."

"Well," cried Cecilia, rising, "I find we shall not have an easy task to manage him; but keep up your spirits, and assure yourself he shall not be lost, if it be possible to save him."

She then, though with much fearfulness of offending, once more made an offer of her purse. Miss Belfield no longer started at the proposal; yet gratefully thanking her, said she was not in any immediate distress, and did not dare risk the displeasure of her brother, unless driven to it by severe necessity. Cecilia, however, drew from her a promise that she would apply to her in any sudden difficulty, and charged her never to think herself without a banker while her direction was known to her.

She then bid her adieu, and returned home; meditating the whole way upon some plan of employment and advantage for Mr. Belfield, which by clearing his prospects, might revive his spirits, and facilitate his recovery: for since his mind was so evidently the seat of his disease, she saw that unless she could do more for him, she had yet done nothing.

Her meditation, however, turned to no account; she could suggest nothing, for she was ignorant what was eligible to suggest. The stations and employments of men she only knew by occasionally hearing that such were their professions, and such their situations in life; but with the means and gradations by which they arose to them she was wholly unacquainted.

Mr. Monckton, her constant resource in all cases of difficulty, immediately occurred to her as her most able counsellor, and she determined by the first opportunity to consult with him upon the subject, certain of advice the most judicious from his experience and knowledge of the world.

But though she rested upon him her serious expectations of assistance, another idea entered her mind not less pleasant, though less promising of utility: this was to mention her views to young Delvile. He was already, she knew, well informed of the distress of Mr. Belfield, and she hoped, by openly asking his opinion, to confirm to him her freedom from any engagement with that gentleman, and convince him, at the same time, by her application to himself, that she was equally clear of any tie with the baronet.

CHAPTER IX.

A SYMPATHY.

THE next day Cecilia had appointed to spend in St. James's-square; and she knew by experience, that in its course, she should in all probability find some opportunity of speaking with Delvile alone.

This accordingly happened; for in the evening Mrs. Delvile quitted the room for a few moments to answer a letter. Cecilia, then, left with her son, said, after a little hesitation, "Will you not think me very strange if I should take the liberty to consult you upon some business?"

"I already think you very strange," answered he; "so strange that I know not any one who at all resembles you. But what is this consultation in which you will permit me to have a voice?"

"You are acquainted, I believe, with the distress of Mr. Belfield?"

"I am; and I think his situation the most melancholy that can be imagined. I pity him with my whole soul, and nothing would give me greater joy than an opportunity of serving him."

"He is, indeed, much to be compassionated," returned Cecilia, "and if something is not speedily done for him, I fear he will be utterly lost. The agitation of his mind baffles all the power of medicine, and till that is relieved, his health can never be restored. His spirit, probably always too high for his rank in life, now struggles against every attack of sickness and of poverty, in preference to yielding to his fate, and applying to his friends for their interest and assistance. I mean not to vindicate his obduracy, yet I wish it were possible it could be surmounted. Indeed, I dread to think what may become of him! feeling at present nothing but wretchedness and pain, looking forward in future to nothing but ruin and despair!"

"There is no man," cried young Delvile, with emotion, "who might not rather envy than pity sufferings which give rise to such compassion!"

"Pecuniary assistance he will not accept," she continued, "and, indeed, his mind is superior to receiving consolation from such temporary relief; I wish him, therefore, to be put into some way of life by which his own talents, which have long enough amused the world, may at length become serviceable to himself. Do you think, sir, this is possible?"

"How do I rejoice," cried Delvile, colouring with pleasure while he spoke, "in this flattering concurrence of our opinions! See, madam," taking from his pocket a letter, "how I have been this very morning occupied, in endeavouring to procure for Mr. Belfield some employment by which his education might be rendered useful, and his parts redound to his own credit and advantage."

He then broke the seal, and put into her hand a letter to a nobleman, whose son was soon going abroad, strongly recommending Belfield to him in capacity of a tutor.

A sympathy of sentiment so striking, impressed them at the same moment with surprise and esteem; Delvile earnestly regarded her with eyes of speaking admiration, while the occasion of his notice rendered it too pleasant to distress her, and filled her with an inward satisfaction which brightened her whole countenance.

She had only time, in a manner that strongly marked her approbation, to return the letter, before Mrs. Delvile again made her appearance.

During the rest of the evening but little was said; Cecilia was not talkative, and young Delvile was so absent, that three times his mother reminded him of an engagement to meet his father, who that night was expected at the Duke of Derwent's house in town, before he heard that she spoke to him, and three times more before, when he had heard, he obeyed.

Cecilia, when she came back to Mr. Harrel's, found the house full of company. She went into the drawing-room, but did not remain there long; she was grave and thoughtful, she wished to be alone, and by the earliest opportunity, stole away to her own apartment.

Her mind was now occupied by new ideas, and her fancy was busied in the delineation of new prospects. She had been struck from her first meeting young Delvile with an involuntary admiration of his manners and conversation;

she had found upon every succeeding interview something further to approve, and felt for him a rising partiality which made her always see him with pleasure, and never part from him without a wish to see him again. Yet, as she was not of that inflammable nature which is always ready to take fire, as her passions were under the control of her reason, and she suffered not her affections to triumph over her principles, she started at her danger the moment she perceived it, and instantly determined to give no weak encouragement to a prepossession which neither time nor intimacy had justified. She denied herself the deluding satisfaction of dwelling upon the supposition of his worth, was unusually assiduous to occupy all her time, that her heart might have less leisure for imagination; and had she found that his character degenerated from the promise of his appearance, the well regulated purity of her mind would soon have enabled her to have driven him wholly from her thoughts.

Such was her situation when the circumstances of her affairs occasioned her becoming an inmate of his house; and here she grew less guarded, because less clear-sighted to the danger of negligence, for the frequency of their conversations allowed her little time to consider their effects. If at first she had been pleased with his deportment and elegance, upon intimacy she was charmed with his disposition and his behaviour; she found him manly, generous, open-hearted and amiable, fond of literature, delighting in knowledge, kind in his temper, and spirited in his actions.

Qualities such as these, when recommended by high birth, a striking figure, and polished manners, formed but a dangerous companion for a young woman, who without the guard of any former prepossession, was so fervent an admirer of excellence as Cecilia. Her heart made no resistance, for the attack was too gentle and too gradual to alarm her vigilance, and therefore, though always sensible of the pleasure she received from his society, it was not till she returned to Portman-square, after having lived under the same roof with him for a fortnight, that she was conscious her happiness was no longer in her own power.

Mr. Harrel's house, which had never pleased her, now became utterly disgustful; she was wearied and uncom-

fortable; yet, willing to attribute her uneasiness to any other than the true cause, she fancied the house itself was changed, and that all its inhabitants and visitors were more than usually disagreeable: but this idle error was of short duration, the moment of self-conviction was at hand, and when Delvile presented her the letter he had written for Mr. Belfield, it flashed in her eyes!

This detection of the altered state of her mind, opened to her views and her hopes a scene entirely new, for neither the exertion of the most active benevolence, nor the steady course of the most virtuous conduct, sufficed any longer to wholly engage her thoughts, or constitute her felicity; she had purposes that came nearer home, and cares that threatened to absorb in themselves that heart and those faculties which hitherto had only seemed animated for the service of others.

Yet this loss of mental freedom gave her not much uneasiness, since the choice of her heart, though involuntary, was approved by her principles, and confirmed by her judgment. Young Delvile's situation in life was just what she wished, more elevated than her own, yet not so exalted as to humble her with a sense of inferiority; his connections were honourable, his mother appeared to her the first of women, his character and disposition seemed formed to make her happy, and her own fortune was so large, that to the state of his she was indifferent.

Delighted with so flattering a union of inclination with propriety, she now began to cherish the partiality she at first had repressed, and thinking the future destination of her life already settled, looked forward with grateful joy to the prospect of ending her days with the man she thought most worthy to be entrusted with the disposal of her fortune.

She had not, indeed, any certainty that the regard of young Delvile was reciprocal, but she had every reason to believe he greatly admired her, and to suspect that his mistaken notion of her prior engagement, first with Mr. Belfield, and afterwards with Sir Robert Floyer, made him at present check those sentiments in her favour which, when that error was removed, she hoped to see encouraged.

Her purpose, therefore, was quietly to wait an explanation, which she rather wished retarded than forwarded, that her leisure and opportunity might be more for investigating his character, and saving herself from repentance.

CHAPTER X.

A CONFLICT.

THE day following this happy intellectual arrangement, Cecilia was visited by Mr. Monckton. That gentleman, who had enquired for her immediately after the Harrels went to their villa, and who had flattered himself with reaping much advantage from their absence, by frequent meetings and confidential discourses, suffered the severest mortification when he found that her stay in town rendered her not the less inaccessible to him, since he had no personal acquaintance with the Delviles, and could not venture to present himself at their house.

He was now received by her with more than usual pleasure; the time had seemed long to her since she had conversed with him, and she was eager to ask his counsel and assistance in her affairs. She related to him the motives which had induced her to go to St. James's-square, and the incorrigible obstinacy with which Mr. Harrel still continued to encourage the addresses of Sir Robert Floyer; she earnestly entreated him to become her agent in a business to which she was unequal, by expostulating in her cause with Mr. Harrel, and by calling upon Sir Robert himself to insist upon his foregoing his unauthorized pretensions.

Mr. Monckton listened eagerly to her account and request, and when she had finished, assured her he would deliberate upon each circumstance of the affair, and then maturely weigh every method he could devise, to extricate her from an embarrassment which now grew far too serious to be safely neglected.

"I will not, however," continued he, "either act or give

my opinion without further enquiry, as I am confident there is a mystery in this business which lies deeper than we can at present fathom. Mr. Harrel has doubtless purposes of his own to answer by this pretended zeal for Sir Robert; nor is it difficult to conjecture what they may be. Friendship, in a man of his light cast, is a mere cover, a mere name, to conceal a connection which has its basis solely in the licentious convenience of borrowing money, going to the same gaming house, and mutually communicating and boasting their mutual vices and intrigues, while, all the time, their regard for each other is equally hollow with their regard for truth and integrity."

He then cautioned her to be extremely careful with respect to any money transactions with Mr. Harrel, whose splendid extravagance he assured her was universally known to exceed his fortune.

The countenance of Cecilia, during this exhortation, was testimony sufficient to the penetrating eyes of Mr. Monckton that his advice came not too soon: a suspicion of the real state of the case speedily occurred to him, and he questioned her minutely upon the subject. She endeavoured to avoid making him any answer, but his discernment was too keen for her artificial evasion, and he very soon gathered all the particulars of her transactions with Mr. Harrel.

He was less alarmed at the sum she had lent him, which was rather within his expectations, than at the method she had been induced to take to procure it. He represented to her in the strongest manner the danger of imposition, nay of ruin, from the extortions and the craft of money-lenders; and he charged her upon no consideration to be tempted or persuaded again to have recourse to such perilous expedients.

She promised the most attentive observance of his advice; and then told him the acquaintance she had made with Miss Belfield, and her sorrow for the situation of her brother; though, satisfied for the present with the plan of young Delvile, she now gave up her design of soliciting his counsel.

In the midst of this conversation, a note was delivered to her from Mr. Delvile senior, acquainting her with his

return to town, and begging the favour of her to call in St. James's-square the next morning, as he wished to speak to her upon some business of importance.

The eager manner in which Cecilia accepted this invitation, and her repeated and earnest exclamation of wonder at what Mr. Delvile could have to say, past not unnoticed by Mr. Monckton; he instantly turned the discourse from the Belfields, the Harrels, and the baronet, to enquire how she had spent her time during her visit in St. James's-square, and what was her opinion of the family after her late opportunities of intimacy?

Cecilia answered that she had yet seen nothing more of Mr. Delvile, who had been absent the whole time, but with equal readiness and pleasure she replied to all his questions concerning his lady, expatiating with warmth and fervour upon her many rare and estimable qualities.

But when the same interrogatories were transferred to the son, she spoke no longer with the same ease, nor with her usual promptitude of sincerity; she was embarrassed, her answers were short, and she endeavoured to hasten from the subject.

Mr. Monckton remarked this change with the most apprehensive quickness; but forcing a smile, "Have you yet," he said, "observed the family compact in which those people are bound to besiege you, and draw you into their snares?"

"No, indeed," cried Cecilia, much hurt by the question, "I am sure no such compact has been formed; and I am sure, too, that if you knew them better, you would yourself be the first to admire and do them justice."

"My dear Miss Beverley," cried he, "I know them already; I do not, indeed, visit them, but I am perfectly acquainted with their characters, which have been drawn to me by those who are most closely connected with them, and who had opportunities of inspection which I hope will never fall to your share, since I am satisfied the trial would pain, though the proof would convince you."

"What then have you heard of them?" cried Cecilia, with much earnestness: "it is, at least, not possible any ill can be said of Mrs Delvile."

"I beg your pardon," returned he, "Mrs. Delvile is not

nearer perfection than the rest of her family, she has only more art in disguising her foibles; because, though she is the daughter of pride, she is the slave of interest."

"I see you have been greatly misinformed," said Cecilia, warmly; "Mrs. Delvile is the noblest of women! she may, indeed, from her very exaltation, have enemies, but they are the enemies of envy, not of resentment, enemies raised by superior merit, not excited by injury or provocation!"

"You will know her better hereafter;" said Mr. Monckton, calmly, "I only hope your knowledge will not be purchased by the sacrifice of your happiness."

"And what knowledge of her, sir," cried Cecilia, starting, "can have power to put my happiness in any danger?"

"I will tell you," answered he, "with all the openness you have a claim to from my regard, and then leave to time to show if I am mistaken. The Delvile family, notwithstanding its ostentatious magnificence, I can solemnly assure you, is poor in every branch, alike lineal and collateral."

"But is it therefore the less estimable?"

"Yes, because the more rapacious. And while they count on each side Dukes, Earls and Barons in their genealogy, the very wealth with which, through your means, they project the support of their insolence, and which they will grasp with all the greediness of avarice, they will think honoured by being employed in their service, while the instrument, all amiable as she is, by which they attain it, will be constantly held down as the disgrace of their alliance."

Cecilia, stung to the soul by this speech, rose from her chair, unwilling to answer it, yet unable to conceal how much it shocked her. Mr. Monckton, perceiving her emotion, followed her, and taking her hand, said, "I would not give this warning to one I thought too weak to profit from it; but as I am well-informed of the use that is meant to be made of your fortune, and the abuse that will follow of yourself, I think it right to prepare you for their artifices, which merely to point out may render abortive."

Cecilia, too much disturbed to thank him, drew back her hand, and continued silent. Mr. Monckton, reading

through her displeasure the state of her affections, saw with terror the greatness of the danger which threatened him. He found, however, that the present was no time for enforcing objections, and perceiving he had already gone too far, though he was by no means disposed to recant, he thought it most prudent to retreat, and let her meditate upon his exhortation while its impression was yet strong in her mind.

He would now, therefore, have taken leave; but Cecilia, endeavouring to recollect herself, and fully persuaded that however he had shocked her, he had only her interest in view, stopt him, saying, "You think me, perhaps, ungrateful, but believe me I am not; I must, however, acknowledge that your censure of Mrs. Delvile hurts me extremely. Indeed, I cannot doubt her worthiness; I must still, therefore, plead for her, and I hope the time will come when you will allow I have not pleaded unjustly."

"Justly or unjustly," answered Mr. Monckton, "I am at least sure you can never plead vainly. I give up, therefore, to your opinion my attack of Mrs. Delvile, and am willing from your commendations to suppose her the best of the race. Nay, I will even own that perhaps Mr. Delvile himself, as well as his lady, might pass through life and give but little offence, had they only themselves to think of, and no son to stimulate their arrogance."

"Is the son, then," said Cecilia, faintly, "so much the most culpable?"

"The son, I believe," answered he, "is at least the chief incentive to insolence and ostentation in the parents, since it is for his sake they covet with such avidity honours and riches, since they plume themselves upon regarding him as the support of their name and family, and since their pride in him even surpasses their pride in their lineage and themselves."

"Ah!" thought Cecilia, "and of such a son who could help being proud!"

"Their purpose, therefore," he continued, "is to secure through his means your fortune, which they will no sooner obtain, than, to my certain knowledge, they mean instantly, and most unmercifully, to employ it in repairing all their dilapidated estates."

And then he quitted the subject; and, with that guarded warmth which accompanied all his expressions, told her he would carefully watch for her honour and welfare, and, repeating his promise of endeavouring to discover the tie by which Mr. Harrel seemed bound to the baronet, he left her —a prey himself to an anxiety yet more severe than that with which he had filled her! He now saw all his long-cherished hopes in danger of final destruction, and suddenly cast upon the brink of a precipice, where, while he struggled to protect them from falling, his eyes were dazzled by beholding them totter.

Meanwhile, Cecilia, disturbed from the calm of soft serenity to which she had yielded every avenue of her soul, now looked forward with distress and uneasiness, even to the completion of the views which but a few minutes before had comprised all her notions of felicity. The alliance which so lately had seemed wholly unexceptionable, now appeared teeming with objections, and threatening with difficulties. The representations of Mr. Monckton had cruelly mortified her; well acquainted with his knowledge of the world, and wholly unsuspicious of his selfish motives, she gave to his assertions involuntary credit, and even while she attempted to combat them, they made upon her mind an impression scarce ever to be erased.

Full, therefore, of doubt and inquietude, she passed the night in discomfort and irresolution, now determining to give way to her feelings, and now to be wholly governed by the counsel of Mr. Monckton.

CHAPTER XI.

AN EXPECTATION.

IN this disposition of mind Cecilia, the next morning, obeyed the summons of Mr. Delvile, and for the first time went to St. James's-square in a humour to look for evil instead of good, and meanness instead of nobleness.

She was shown into an apartment where she found Mr.

Delvile alone, and was received by him, as usual, with the most stately solemnity.

When she was seated, "I have given you, Miss Beverley," said he, "the trouble of calling, in order to discuss with you the internal state of your affairs; a duty which, at this juncture, I hold to be incumbent upon my character. The delicacy due to your sex would certainly have induced me to wait upon you myself for this purpose, but for the reasons I have already hinted to you, of fearing the people with whom you live might think it necessary to return my visit. Persons of low origin are commonly in those matters the most forward. Not, however, that I would prejudice you against them; though, for myself, it is fit I remember that a general and indiscriminate acquaintance, by levelling all ranks, does injury to the rites of society."

Ah!" thought Cecilia, "how infallible is Mr. Monckton! and how inevitably, in a family of which Mr. Delvile is the head, should I be cruelly *held down, as the disgrace of their alliance!*"

"I have applied," continued he, "to Mrs. Delvile, to know if the communication which I had recommended to you, and to which she had promised her attention, had yet passed; but I am informed you have not spoken to her upon the subject."

"I had nothing, sir, to communicate," answered Cecilia, "and I had hoped, as Mrs. Delvile made no enquiries, she was satisfied she had nothing to hear."

"With respect to enquiries," said Mr. Delvile, "I fear you are not sufficiently aware of the distance between a lady of Mrs. Delvile's rank, both by birth and alliance, and such a young woman as Mrs. Harrel, whose ancestors, but a short time since, were mere Suffolk farmers. But I beg your pardon;——I mean not any reflection upon yours: I have always heard they were very worthy people. And a farmer is certainly a very respectable person. Your father, I think, no more than the Dean your uncle, did nothing in that way himself?"

"No, sir," said Cecilia, drily, and much provoked by this contemptuous courtesy.

"I have always been told he was a very good sort of man: I knew none of the family myself, but the Dean.

His connections with the Bishop of ——, my relation, put him often in my way. Though his naming me for one of his trustees, I must own, was rather extraordinary; but I mean not to hurt you; on the contrary, I should be much concerned to give you any uneasiness."

Again Mr. Monckton arose in the mind of Cecilia, and again she acknowledged the truth of his strictures; and though she much wondered in what an harangue so pompous was to end, her disgust so far conquered her curiosity, that without hearing it she wished herself away.

"To return," said he, "to my purpose. The present period of your life is such as to render advice particularly seasonable; I am sorry, therefore, as I before said, you have not disclosed your situation to Mrs. Delvile. A young lady on the point of making an establishment, and with many engagements in her power, is extremely liable to be mistaken in her judgment, and therefore should solicit instruction from those who are able to acquaint her what connection would be most to her advantage. One thing, however, I am happy to commend: the young man who was wounded in the duel——I cannot recollect his name——is, I hear, totally out of the question."

"What next?" thought Cecilia; though still she gave him no interruption, for the haughtiness of his manner was repulsive to reply.

"My design, therefore, is to speak to you of Sir Robert Floyer. When I had last the pleasure of addressing you upon this subject, you may probably remember my voice was in his favour; but I then regarded him merely as the rival of an inconsiderable young man, to rescue you from whom he appeared an eligible person. The affair is now altered, that young man is thought of no more, and another rival comes forward, to whom Sir Robert is as inconsiderable as the first rival was to Sir Robert."

Cecilia started at this information, livelier sensations stimulated her curiosity, and surmises in which she was most deeply interested quickened her attention.

"This rival," proceeded he, "I should imagine no young lady would a moment hesitate in electing; he is every way the superior of Sir Robert except in fortune, and the deficiencies of that the splendour of your own may amply supply."

The deepest crimson now tinged the cheeks of Cecilia; the prophecy of Mr. Monckton seemed immediately fulfilling, and she trembled with a rising conflict between her approbation of the offer, and her dread of its consequences.

"I know not, indeed," continued he, "in what estimation you may have been accustomed to hold rank and connection, nor whether you are impressed with a proper sense of their superiority and value; for early prejudices are not easily rooted out, and those who have lived chiefly with monied people, regard even birth itself as unimportant when compared with wealth."

The colour which first glowed in the cheeks of Cecilia from expectation, now rose yet higher from resentment: she thought herself already insulted by a prelude so ostentatious and humiliating to the proposals which were to follow; and she angrily determined, with whatever pain to her heart, to assert her own dignity, by refusing them at once, too well satisfied by what she now saw of the present, that Mr. Monckton had been just in his prediction of the future.

"Your rejection, therefore," continued he, "of this honourable offer, may perhaps have been merely the consequence of the principles in which you have been educated.—"

"Rejection?" interrupted Cecilia, amazed, "what rejection, sir?"

"Have you not refused the proposals of my Lord Ernolf for his son?"

"Lord Ernolf? never! nor have I ever seen either his lordship or his son but in public."

"That," replied Mr. Delvile, "is little to the purpose; where the connexion is a proper one, a young lady of delicacy has only to accede to it. But though this rejection came not immediately from yourself, it had doubtless your concurrence."

"It had not, sir, even my knowledge."

"Your alliance, then, with Sir Robert Floyer is probably nearer a conclusion than I had imagined, for otherwise Mr. Harrel would not, without consulting you, have given the Earl so determinate an answer."

"No, sir," said Cecilia, impatiently, "my alliance with

him was never more distant, nor do I mean it should ever approach more near."

She was now little disposed for further conversation. Her heroic design of refusing young Delvile by no means reconciled her to the discovery she now made that he had not meant to address her; and though she was provoked and fretted at this new proof that Mr. Harrel scrupled neither assertions nor actions to make her engagement with Sir Robert credited, her disappointment in finding that Mr Delvile, instead of pleading the cause of his son, was exerting his interest for another person, affected her so much more nearly, that notwithstanding he still continued his parading harangue, she scarcely knew even the subject of his discourse, and seized the first opportunity of a cessation to rise and take her leave.

He asked her if she would not call upon Mrs. Delvile: but desirous to be alone, she declined the invitation: he then charged her to proceed no further with Sir Robert till he had made some enquiries concerning Lord Ernolf, and graciously promising his protection and counsel, suffered her to depart.

Cecilia now perceived she might plan her rejections, or study her dignity at her leisure, for neither Mr. Delvile nor his son seemed in any haste to put her fortitude to the proof. With regard, therefore, to their plots and intentions, Mr. Monckton she found was wrong, but with respect to their conduct and sentiments, she had every reason to believe him right: and though her heart refused to rejoice in escaping a trial of its strength, her judgment was so well convinced that his painting was from the life, that she determined to conquer her partiality for young Delvile, since she looked forward to nothing but mortification in a connexion with his family.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

AN AGITATION.

WITH this intention, and every faculty of her mind absorbed in reflecting upon the reasons which gave rise to it, she returned to Portman-square.

As her chair was carried into the hall, she observed, with some alarm, a look of consternation among the servants, and an appearance of confusion in the whole house. She was proceeding to her own room, intending to enquire of her maid if any evil had happened, when she was crossed upon the stairs by Mr. Harrel, who passed her with an air so wild and perturbed, that he hardly seemed to know her.

Frightened and amazed, she stopt short, irresolute which way to go; but, hastily returning, he beckoned her to follow him.

She obeyed, and he led her to the library. He then shut the door, and abruptly seizing her hand, called out, "Miss Beverley, I am ruined!—I am undone!—I am blasted for ever!"

"I hope not, sir!" said Cecilia, extremely terrified, "I hope not! Where is Mrs. Harrel?"

"O, I know not! I know not!" cried he, in a frantic manner, "but I have not seen her,—I cannot see her,—I hope I shall never see her more!—"

"O, fie! fie!" said Cecilia, "let me call her, I beg; you should consult with her in this distress, and seek comfort from her affection."

"From her affection?" repeated he, fiercely, "from her hatred you mean! do you not know that she, too, is ruined?

Oh past redemption ruined!—and yet that I should hesitate, that I should a moment hesitate, to conclude the whole business at once!"

"How dreadful!" cried Cecilia, "what horrible thing has happened?"

"I have undone Priscilla!" cried he, "I have blasted my credit! I have destroyed—no, not yet quite destroyed myself!"

"O not yet, nor ever!" cried Cecilia, whose agitation now almost equalled his own, "be not so desperate, I conjure you! speak to me more intelligibly,—what does all this mean? How has it come to pass?"

"My debts!—my creditors!—one way only," striking his hand upon his forehead, "is left for me!"

"Do not say so, sir!" said Cecilia, "you shall find many ways; pray have courage! pray speak calmly; and if you will but be more prudent, will but, in future, better regulate your affairs, I will myself undertake——"

She stopt; checked in the full career of her overflowing compassion, by a sense of the worthlessness of its object; and by the remembrance of the injunctions of Mr. Monckton.

"What will you undertake?" cried he, eagerly, "I know you are an angel!—tell me, what will you undertake?"

"I will,—" said Cecilia, hesitating, "I will speak to Mr. Monckton,—I will consult——"

"You may as well consult with every cursed creditor in the house!" interrupted he; "but do so, if you please; my disgrace must perforce reach him soon, and a short anticipation is not worth begging off."

"Are your creditors then actually in the house?"

"O yes, yes! and therefore it is high time I should be out of it!—Did you not see them?—Do they not line the hall?—They threaten me with three executions before night!—three executions unless I satisfy their immediate demands!—"

"And to what do their demands amount?"

"I know not!—I dare not ask!—to some thousand pounds, perhaps,—and I have not, at this minute, forty guineas in the house!"

"Nay, then," cried Cecilia, retreating, "I can indeed do nothing! if their demands are so high, I *ought* to do nothing."

She would then have quitted him, not more shocked at his situation, than indignant at the wilful extravagance which had occasioned it.

"Stay," cried he, "and hear me!" then lowering his voice, "seek out," he continued, "your unfortunate friend,—go to the poor ruined Priscilla,—prepare her for tidings of horror! and do not, though you renounce Me, do not abandon Her!"

Then, fiercely passing her, he was himself leaving the room; but Cecilia, alarmed by the fury of his manner, called out, "What is it you mean? what tidings of horror? whither are you going?"

"To hell!" cried he, and rushed out of the apartment.

Cecilia screamed aloud, and conjuring him to hear her, ran after him; he paid her no regard, but, flying faster than she had power to pursue, reached his own dressing-room, shut himself into it with violence, and just as she arrived at the door, turned the key, and bolted it.

Her terror was now inexpressible; she believed him in the very act of suicide, and her refusal of assistance seemed the signal for the deed: her whole fortune, at that moment, was valueless and unimportant to her, compared with the preservation of a fellow-creature: she called out with all the vehemence of agony to beg he would open the door, and eagerly promised by all that was sacred to do every thing in her power to save him.

At these words he opened it; his face was totally without colour, and he grasped a razor in his hand.

"You have stopt me," said he, in a voice scarce audible, "at the very moment I had gathered courage for the blow: but if indeed you will assist me, I will shut this up,—if not, I will steep it my blood!"

"I will! I will!" cried Cecilia, "I will do everything you desire!"

"And quickly?"

"Immediately."

"Before my disgrace is known? and while all may yet be hushed up?"

"Yes, yes! all—any—everything you wish!"

"Swear, then!"

Here Cecilia drew back; her recollection returned as her terror abated, and her repugnance to entering into an engagement for she knew not what, with a man whose actions she condemned, and whose principles she abhorred, made all her fright now give way to indignation, and, after a short pause, she angrily answered, "No, sir, I will not swear!—but yet, all that is reasonable, all that is friendly——"

"Hear *me* swear, then!" interrupted he, furiously, "which at this moment I do, by every thing eternal, and by every thing infernal, that I will not outlive the seizure of my property, and that the moment I am informed there is an execution in my house, shall be the last of my existence!"

"What cruelty! what compulsion! what impiety!" cried Cecilia: "give me, however, that horrible instrument, and prescribe to me what conditions you please."

A noise was now heard below stairs, at which Cecilia, who had not dared call for help lest she should quicken his desperation, was secretly beginning to rejoice, when, starting at the sound, he exclaimed, "I believe you are too late! —the ruffians have already seized my house!" then, endeavouring to force her out of the room, "Go," he cried "to my wife;—I want to be alone!"

"Oh, give me first," cried she, "that weapon, and I will take what oath you please!"

"No, no!—go,—leave me,—" cried he, almost breathless with emotion, "I must not now be trifled with."

"I do not trifle! indeed I do not!" cried Cecilia, holding by his arm: "try, put me to the proof!"

"Swear, solemnly swear, to empty my house of these creditors this moment!"

"I *do* swear," cried she, with energy, "and Heaven prosper me as I am sincere!"

"I see, I see you are an angel!" cried he, rapturously, "and as such I worship and adore you! O, you have restored me to life, and rescued me from perdition!"

"Give me, then, that fatal instrument!"

"That instrument," returned he, "is nothing, since so many others are in my power; but you have now taken from me all desire of using them. Go, then, and stop those wretches from coming to me—send immediately for the

Jew!—he will advance what money you please,—my man knows where to find him;—consult with Mr. Arnott,—speak a word of comfort to Priscilla,—but do nothing, nothing at all, till you have cleared my house of those cursed scoundrels!"

Cecilia, whose heart sunk within her at the solemn promise she had given, the mention of the Jew, and the arduous task she had undertaken, quitted him without reply, and was going to her own room, to compose her hurried spirits, and consider what steps she had to take, when, hearing the noise in the hall grow louder, she stopt to listen, and catching some words that greatly alarmed her, went half way down stairs, when she was met by Davison, Mr. Harrel's man, of whom she enquired into the occasion of the disturbance.

He answered that he must go immediately to his master, for the bailiffs were coming into the house.

"Let him not know it if you value his life!" cried she, with new terror. "Where is Mr. Arnott? call him to me—beg him to come this moment;—I will wait for him here."

The man flew to obey her: and Cecilia, finding she had time neither for deliberation nor regret, and dreading lest Mr. Harrel, by hearing of the arrival of the bailiffs, should relapse into despair, determined to call to her aid all the courage, prudence, and judgment she possessed, and since to act she was compelled, endeavour with her best ability, to save his credit, and retrieve his affairs.

The moment Mr. Arnott came, she ordered Davison to hasten to his master, and watch his motions.

Then, addressing Mr. Arnott, "Will you, sir," she said, "go and tell those people that if they will instantly quit the house, every thing shall be settled, and Mr. Harrel will satisfy their demands?"

"Ah, madam!" cried Mr. Arnott, mournfully, "and how? he has no means to pay them, and I have none—without ruin to myself,—to help him!"

"Send them but away," said Cecilia, "and I will myself be your security that your promise shall not be disgraced."

"Alas, madam," cried he, "what are you doing? well as I wish to Mr. Harrel, miserable as I am for my unfortunate

sister, I yet cannot bear that such goodness, such beneficence should be injured!"

Cecilia, however, persisted, and with evident reluctance he obeyed her.

While she waited his return, Davison came from Mr. Harrel, who had ordered him to run instantly for the Jew.

"Good Heaven," thought Cecilia, "that a man so wretchedly selfish and worldly, should dare, with all his guilt upon his head,

'To rush unlicenced on eternity!'[1]"

Mr. Arnott was more than half an hour with the people; and when, at last, he returned, his countenance immediately proclaimed the ill success of his errand. The creditors, he said, declared they had so frequently been deceived, that they would not dismiss the bailiffs, or retire themselves, without actual payment.

"Tell them, then, sir," said Cecilia, "to send me their accounts, and, if it be possible, I will discharge them directly."

Mr. Arnott's eyes were filled with tears at this declaration, and he protested, be the consequence to himself what it might, he would pay away every shilling he was worth, rather than witness such injustice.

"No," cried Cecilia, exerting more spirit, that she might shock him less, "I did not save Mr. Harrel, to destroy so much better a man! you have suffered but too much oppression already; the present evil is mine; and from me, at least, none I hope will ever spread to Mr Arnott."

Mr. Arnott could not bear this; he was struck with grief, with admiration, and with gratitude, and finding his tears now refused to be restrained, he went to execute her commission in silent dejection.

The dejection, however, was encreased, though his tears were dispersed, when he returned; "Oh, madam!" he cried, "all your efforts, generous as they are, will be of no avail! the bills even now in the house amount to more than £7000!"

[1] Mason's Elfrida.—*Author's note.*

Cecilia, amazed and confounded, started and clasped her hands, calling out, "What must I do! to what have I bound myself! and how can I answer to my conscience,—to my successors, such a disposal, such an abuse of so large a part of my fortune!"

Mr. Arnott could make no answer; and they stood looking at each other in silent irresolution, till Davison brought intelligence that the Jew was already come, and waited to speak with her.

"And what can I say to him?" cried she, more and more agitated; "I understand nothing of usury; how am I to deal with him?"

Mr. Arnott then confessed that he should himself have instantly been bail for his brother, but that his fortune, originally not large, was now so much impaired by the many debts which from time he had paid for him, that as he hoped some day to have a family of his own, he dared not run a risk by which he might be utterly ruined, and the less, as his sister had at Violet Bank been prevailed upon to give up her settlement.

This account, which explained the late uneasiness of Mrs. Harrel, still encreased the distress of Cecilia; and every moment she obtained for reflection, augmented her reluctance to parting with so large a sum of money for so worthless an object, and added strength to her resentment for the unjustifiable menaces which had extorted from her such a promise. Yet not an instant would she listen to Mr. Arnott's offer of fulfilling her engagement, and charged him, as he considered her own self-esteem worth her keeping, not to urge to her a proposal so ungenerous and selfish.

Davison now came again to hasten her, and said that the Jew was with his master, and they both impatiently expected her.

Cecilia, half distracted with her uncertainty how to act, changed colour at this message, and exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Arnott, run I beseech you for Mr. Monckton! bring him hither directly,—if any body can save me it is him; but if I go back to Mr. Harrel, I know it will be all over!"

"Certainly," said Mr. Arnott, "I will run to him this moment."

"Yet no!—stop!—" cried the trembling Cecilia, "he can now do me no good,—his counsel will arrive too late to serve me,—it cannot call back the oath I have given! it cannot, compulsatory as it was, make me break it, and not be miserable for ever!"

This idea sufficed to determine her; and the apprehension of self-reproach, should the threat of Mr. Harrel be put in execution, was more insupportable to her blameless and upright mind, than any loss or diminution which her fortune could sustain.

Slowly, however, with tardy and unwilling steps, her judgment repugnant, and her spirit repining, she obeyed the summons of Mr. Harrel, who, impatient of her delay, came forward to meet her.

"Miss Beverley," he cried, "there is not a moment to be lost; this good man will bring you any sum of money, upon a proper consideration, that you will command; but if he is not immediately commissioned, and these cursed fellows are not got out of my house, the affair will be blown,——and what will follow," added he, lowering his voice, "I will not again frighten you by repeating, though I shall never recant."

Cecilia turned from him in horror; and, with a faltering voice and heavy heart, entreated Mr. Arnott to settle for her with the Jew.

Large as was the sum, she was so near being of age, and her security was so good, that the transaction was soon finished: £7500 was received of the Jew, Mr. Harrel gave Cecilia his bond for the payment, the creditors were satisfied, the bailiffs were dismissed, and the house was soon restored to its customary appearance of splendid gaiety.

Mrs. Harrel, who during this scene had shut herself up in her own room to weep and lament, now flew to Cecilia, and in a transport of joy and gratitude, thanked her upon her knees for thus preserving her from utter ruin: the gentle Mr. Arnott seemed uncertain whether most to grieve or rejoice; and Mr. Harrel repeatedly protested she should have the sole guidance of his future conduct.

This promise, the hope of his amendment, and the joy she had expanded, somewhat revived the spirits of Cecilia;

who, however, deeply affected by what had passed, hastened from them all to her own room.

She had now parted with £8050 to Mr. Harrel, without any security when or how it was to be paid; and that ardour of benevolence which taught her to value her riches merely as they enabled her to do good and generous actions, was here of no avail to console or reward her, for her gift was compelled, and its receiver was all but detested. "How much better," cried she, "would this have been bestowed upon the amiable Miss Belfield! or upon her noble-minded, though proud-spirited brother! and how much less a sum would have made the virtuous and industrious Hills easy and happy for life! but here, to become the tool of the extravagance I abhor! to be made responsible for the luxury I condemn! to be liberal in opposition to my principles, and lavish in defiance of my judgment!—Oh, that my much-deceived uncle had better known to what dangerous hands he committed me! and that my weak and unhappy friend had met with a worthier protector of her virtue and safety!"

As soon, however, as she recovered from the first shock of her reflections, she turned her thoughts from herself to the formation of some plan that might, at least, render her donation of serious and lasting use. The signal service she had just done them gave her at present an ascendancy over the Harrels, which she hoped, if immediately exerted, might prevent the return of so calamitous a scene, by engaging them both to an immediate change of conduct. But unequal herself to contriving expedients for this purpose that might not easily be controverted, she determined to send the next morning a petition to Mr. Monckton to call upon her, reveal to him the whole transaction, and entreat him to suggest to her what, with most probability of success, she might offer to their consideration.

While this was passing in her mind, on the evening of the day in which she had so dearly purchased the right of giving counsel, she was summoned to tea.

She found Mr. Harrel and his lady engaged in earnest discourse: as soon as she appeared, the former said, "My dear Miss Beverley, after the extraordinary kindness you have shown me this morning, you will not, I am

sure, deny me one trifling favour which I mean to ask this evening."

"No," said Mrs. Harrel, "that I am sure she will not, when she knows that our future appearance in the world depends upon her granting it."

"I hope then," said Cecilia, "I shall not wish to refuse it."

"It is nothing in the world," said Mr. Harrel, "but to go with us to-night to the Pantheon."

Cecilia was struck with the utmost indignation at this proposal; that the man who in the morning had an execution in his house, should languish in the evening for the amusement of a public place,—that he who but a few hours before was plunging uncalled into eternity, should, while the intended instrument of death was yet scarce cold from the grasp of his hand, deliberately court a return of his distress, by instantly recurring to the methods which had involved him in it, irritated and shocked her beyond even a wish of disguising her displeasure, and therefore, after an expressive silence, she gave a cold, but absolute denial.

"I see," said Mr. Harrel, somewhat confused, "you do not understand the motives of our request. The unfortunate affair of this morning is very likely to spread presently all over the town; the only refutation that can be given to it, is by our all appearing in public before any body knows whether to believe it or not."

"Do, my dearest friend," cried his lady, "oblige me by your compliance; indeed our whole reputation depends upon it. I made an engagement yesterday to go with Mrs. Mears, and if I disappoint her, every body will be guessing the reason."

"At least," answered Cecilia, "*my* going can answer no purpose to you: pray, therefore, do not ask me; I am ill disposed for such sort of amusement, and have by no means your opinion of its necessity."

"But if we do not *all* go," said Mr. Harrel, "we do almost nothing: you are known to live with us, and your appearance at this critical time is important to our credit. If this misfortune gets wind, the consequence is that every dirty tradesman in town to whom I owe a shilling, will be forming the same cursed combination those scoundrels

formed this morning, of coming in a body, and waiting for their money, or else bringing an execution into my house. The only way to silence report is by putting a good face upon the matter at once, and showing ourselves to the world as if nothing had happened. Favour us, therefore, to-night with your company, which is really important to us, or ten to one, but in another fortnight, I shall be just in the same scrape."

Cecilia, however incensed at this intelligence that his debts were still so numerous, felt now as much alarmed at the mention of an execution, as if she was in actual danger of ruin herself. Terrified, therefore, though not convinced, she yielded to their persuasions, and consented to accompany them.

They soon after separated to make some alteration in their dress; and then, calling in their way for Mrs. Mears they proceeded to the Pantheon.

CHAPTER II.

A MAN OF THE TON.

AT the door of the Pantheon they were joined by Mr. Arnott and Sir Robert Floyer, whom Cecilia now saw with added aversion: they entered the great room during the second act of the Concert, to which, as no one of the party but herself had any desire to listen, no sort of attention was paid; the ladies entertaining themselves as if no orchestra was in the room, and the gentlemen, with an equal disregard to it, struggling for a place by the fire, about which they continued hovering till the music was over.

Soon after they were seated, Mr. Meadows, sauntering towards them, whispered something to Mrs. Mears, who, immediately rising, introduced him to Cecilia; after which, the place next to her being vacant, he cast himself upon it, and lolling as much at his ease as his situation would permit, began something like a conversation with her.

"Have you been long in town, ma'am?"

"No, sir."

"This is not your first winter?"

"Of being in town, it is."

"Then you have something new to see: O charming! how I envy you!—Are you pleased with the Pantheon?"

"Very much; I have seen no building at all equal to it."

"You have not been abroad. Travelling is the ruin of all happiness! There's no looking at a building here after seeing Italy."

"Does all happiness, then, depend upon the sight of buildings?" said Cecilia, when, turning towards her companion, she perceived him yawning, with such evident inattention to her answer, that not choosing to interrupt his reverie, she turned her head another way.

For some minutes he took no notice of this; and then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he called out hastily, "I beg your pardon, ma'am, you were saying something?"

"No, sir, nothing worth repeating."

"O, pray don't punish me so severely as not to let me hear it!"

Cecilia, though merely not to seem offended at his negligence, was then again beginning an answer, when looking at him as she spoke, she perceived that he was biting his nails with so absent an air, that he appeared not to know he had asked any question. She therefore broke off, and left him to his cogitation.

Some time after he addressed her again, saying, "Don't you find this place extremely tiresome, ma'am?"

"Yes, sir," said she, half laughing, "it is, indeed, not very entertaining!"

"Nothing is entertaining," answered he, "for two minutes together. Things are so little different one from another, that there is no making pleasure out of any thing. We go the same dull round for ever; nothing new, no variety! all the same thing over again! Are you fond of public places, ma'am?"

"Yes, sir, *soberly*, as Lady Grace says."

"Then I envy you extremely, for you have some amusement always in your own power. How desirable that is!"

"And have not you the same resources?"

"O no! I am tired to death! tired of every thing! I would give the universe for a disposition less difficult to please. Yet, after all, what is there to give pleasure? When one has seen one thing, one has seen every thing. O, 'tis heavy work! Don't you find it so, ma'am?"

This speech was ended with so violent a fit of yawning, that Cecilia would not trouble herself to answer it: but her silence, as before, passed wholly unnoticed, exciting neither question nor comment.

A long pause now succeeded, which he broke at last, by saying, as he writhed himself about upon his seat, "These forms would be much more agreeable if there were backs to them. 'Tis intolerable to be forced to sit like a school-boy. The first study of life is ease. There is, indeed, no other study that pays the trouble of attainment. Don't you think so, ma'am?"

"But may not even that," said Cecilia, "by so much study, become labour?"

"I am vastly happy you think so."

"Sir?"

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I thought you said—— I really beg your pardon, but I was thinking of something else."

"You did very right, sir," said Cecilia, laughing, "for what I said by no means merited any attention."

"Will you do me the favour to repeat it?" cried he taking out his glass to examine some lady at a distance.

"O, no," said Cecilia, "that would be trying your patience too severely."

"These glasses show one nothing but defects," said he; "I am sorry they were ever invented. They are the ruin of all beauty; no complexion can stand them. I believe that solo will never be over! I hate a solo; it sinks, it depresses me intolerably."

"You will presently, sir," said Cecilia, looking at the bill of the concert, "have a full piece; and that, I hope, will revive you."

"A full piece! oh insupportable! it stuns, it fatigues, it overpowers me beyond endurance! no taste in it, no delicacy, no room for the smallest feeling."

"Perhaps, then, you are only fond of singing?"

"I should be, if I could hear it; but we are now so miserably off in voices, that I hardly ever attempt to listen to a song, without fancying myself deaf from the feebleness of the performers. I hate everything that requires attention. Nothing gives pleasure that does not force its own way."

"You only, then, like loud voices, and great powers?"

"O, worse and worse!——no, nothing is so disgusting to me. All my amazement is that these people think it worth while to give concerts at all; one is sick to death of music."

"Nay," cried Cecilia, "if it gives no pleasure, at least it takes none away; for, far from being any impediment to conversation, I think every body talks more during the performance than between the acts. And what is there better you could substitute in its place?"

Cecilia, receiving no answer to this question, again looked round to see if she had been heard; when she observed her new acquaintance, with a very thoughtful air, had turned from her to fix his eyes upon the statue of Britannia.

Very soon after, he hastily arose, and seeming entirely to forget that he had spoken to her, very abruptly walked away.

Mr. Gosport, who was advancing to Cecilia, and had watched part of this scene, stopt him as he was retreating, and said "Why Meadows, how's this? are you caught at last?"

"O, worn to death! worn to a thread!" cried he, stretching himself and yawning; "I have been talking with a young lady to entertain her! O, such heavy work! I would not go through it again for millions!"

"What, have you talked yourself out of breath?"

"No; but the effort! the effort!—O, it has unhinged me for a fortnight!—Entertaining a young lady!—one had better be a galley-slave at once!"

"Well but, did she not pay your toils? She is surely a sweet creature."

"Nothing can pay one for such insufferable exertion! though she's well enough, too,—better than the common run,—but shy, quite too shy; no drawing her out."

"I thought that was to your taste. You commonly hate much volubility. How have I heard you bemoan yourself when attacked by Miss Larolles!"

"Larolles? O, distraction! She talks me into a fever in two minutes. But so it is for ever! nothing but extremes to be met with! common girls are too forward, this lady is too reserved——always some fault! always some drawback! nothing ever perfect!"

"Nay, nay," cried Mr. Gosport, "you do not know her; she is perfect enough in all conscience."

"Better not know her then," answered he, again yawning, "for she cannot be pleasing. Nothing perfect is natural;—I hate every thing out of nature."

He then strolled on, and Mr. Gosport approached Cecilia.

"I have been wishing," cried he, "to address you this half hour, but as you were engaged with Mr. Meadows, I did not dare advance."

"O, I see your malice!" cried Cecilia; "you were determined to add weight to the value of your company, by making me fully sensible where the balance would preponderate."

"Nay, if you do not admire Mr. Meadows," cried he, "you must not even whisper it to the winds."

"Is he then so very admirable?"

"O, he is now in the very height of fashionable favour: his dress is a model, his manners are imitated, his attention is courted, and his notice is envied."

"Are you not laughing?"

"No, indeed; his privileges are much more extensive than I have mentioned: his decision fixes the exact limits between what is vulgar and what is elegant, his praise gives reputation, and a word from him in public confers fashion!"

"And by what wonderful powers has he acquired such influence?"

"By nothing but a happy art in catching the reigning foibles of the times, and carrying them to an extreme yet more absurd than any one had done before him. Ceremony, he found, was already exploded for ease, he therefore, exploded ease for indolence; devotion to the fair sex

had given way to a more equal and rational intercourse, which, to push still farther, he presently exchanged for rudeness; joviality, too, was already banished for philosophical indifference, and that, therefore, he discarded, for weariness and disgust."

"And is it possible that qualities such as these should recommend him to favour and admiration?"

"Very possible, for qualities such as these constitute the present state of the times. A man of the *Ton*, who would now be conspicuous in the gay world, must invariably be insipid, negligent, and selfish."

"Admirable requisites!" cried Cecilia; "and Mr. Meadows, I acknowledge, seems to have attained them all."

"He must never," continued Mr. Gosport, "confess the least pleasure from any thing, a total apathy being the chief ingredient of his character: he must, upon no account, sustain a conversation with any spirit, lest he should appear, to his utter disgrace, interested in what is said: and when he is quite tired of his existence, from a total vacuity of ideas, he must affect a look of absence, and pretend, on the sudden, to be wholly lost in thought."

"I would not wish," said Cecilia, laughing, "a more amiable companion!"

"If he is asked his opinion of any lady," he continued, "he must commonly answer by a grimace; and if he is seated next to one, he must take the utmost pains to show by his listlessness, yawning and inattention, that he is sick of his situation; for what he holds of all things to be most gothic, is gallantry to the women. To avoid this is, indeed, the principal solicitude of his life. If he sees a lady in distress for her carriage, he is to enquire of her what is the matter, and then, with a shrug, wish her well through her fatigues, wink at some by-stander, and walk away. If he is in a room where there is a crowd of company, and a scarcity of seats, he must early ensure one of the best in the place, be blind to all looks of fatigue, and deaf to all hints of assistance, and seeming totally to forget himself, lounge at his ease, and appear an unconscious spectator of what is going forward. If he is at a ball where there are more women than men, he must decline dancing at all, though it should happen to be his favourite amusement,

and smiling as he passes the disengaged young ladies, wonder to see them sit still, and perhaps ask them the reason!"

"A most alluring character indeed!" cried Cecilia; "and pray how long have these been the accomplishments of a fine gentleman?"

"I am but an indifferent chronologer of the modes," he answered; "but I know it has been long enough to raise just expectations that some new folly will be started soon, by which the present race of INSENSIBLISTS may be driven out. Mr. Meadows is now at the head of this sect, as Miss Larolles is of the VOLUBLE, and Miss Leeson of the SUPERCILIOUS. But this way comes another, who, though in a different manner, labours with the same view, and aspires at the same reward, which stimulate the ambition of this happy *Triplet*, that of exciting wonder by peculiarity, and envy by wonder."

This description announced Captain Aresby; who, advancing from the fire-place, told Cecilia how much he rejoiced in seeing her, said he had been *reduced to despair* by so long missing that honour, and that he had feared she *made it a principle* to avoid coming in public, having sought her in vain *partout*.

He then smiled, and strolled on to another party.

"And pray of what sect," said Cecilia, "is this gentleman?"

"Of the sect of JARGONISTS," answered Mr. Gosport; "he has not an ambition beyond paying a passing compliment, nor a word to make use of that he has not picked up at public places. Yet this dearth of language, however you may despise it, is not merely owing to a narrow capacity: foppery and conceit have their share in the limitation, for though his phrases are almost always ridiculous or misapplied, they are selected with much study, and introduced with infinite pain."

"Poor man!" cried Cecilia, "is it possible it can cost him any trouble to render himself so completely absurd?"

"Yes; but not more than it costs his neighbours to keep him in countenance. Miss Leeson, since she has presided over the sect of the SUPERCILIOUS, spends at least

half her life in wishing the annihilation of the other half; for as she must only speak in her own coterie, she is compelled to be frequently silent, and therefore, having nothing to think of, she is commonly gnawn with self-denial, and soured with want of amusement: Miss Larolles, indeed, is better off, for in talking faster than she thinks, she has but followed the natural bent of her disposition: as to this poor JARGONIST, he has, I must own, rather a hard task, from the continual restraint of speaking only out of his own Liliputian vocabulary, and denying himself the relief of ever uttering one word by the call of occasion: but what hardship is that, compared with what is borne by Mr. Meadows? who, since he commenced INSENSIBLIST, has never once dared to be pleased, nor ventured for a moment to look in good humour!"

"Surely, then," said Cecilia, "in a short time, the punishment of this affectation will bring its cure."

"No; for the trick grows into habit, and habit is a second nature. A secret idea of fame makes his forbearance of happiness supportable to him; for he has now the self-satisfaction of considering himself raised to that highest pinnacle of fashionable refinement which is built upon apathy and scorn, and from which, proclaiming himself superior to all possibility of enjoyment, he views the whole world with contempt! holding neither beauty, virtue, wealth nor power, of importance sufficient to kindle the smallest emotion!"

"O, that they could all round listen to you!" cried Cecilia; "they would soon, I think, sicken of their folly, if they heard it thus admirably exposed."

"No; they would but triumph that it had obtained them so much notice!—But pray do you see that gentleman, or don't you choose to know him, who has been bowing to you this half hour?"

"Where?" cried Cecilia, and, looking round, perceived Mr. Morrice; who, upon her returning his salutation, instantly approached her, though he had never ventured to show himself at Mr. Harrel's, since his unfortunate accident on the evening of the masquerade.

Entirely casting aside the easy familiarity at which he had latterly arrived, he enquired after her health with the

most fearful diffidence, and then, bowing profoundly, was modestly retiring; when Mrs. Harrel, perceiving him, smiled with so much good-humour, that he gathered courage to return and address her, and found her, to his infinite delight, as obliging and civil as ever.

The Concert was now over; the ladies arose, and the gentlemen joined them. Morrice, at sight of Mr. Harrel, was again shrinking; but Mr. Harrel, immediately shaking hands with him, enquired what had kept him so long from Portman-square? Morrice then, finding, to his great surprise, that no one had thought more of the mischief but himself who had committed it, joyously discarded his timidity, and became as sprightly as before his mortification.

A motion was now made for going to the tea-room; and as they walked on, Cecilia, in looking up to examine the building, saw in one of the galleries young Delvile, and almost at the same time caught his eye.

Scarcely now did a moment elapse before he joined her. The sight of him, strongly reviving in her mind the painful contrariety of opinion with which she had lately thought of him, the sentiments so much in his favour which but a few days before she had encouraged, and which it was only that morning she had endeavoured to crush, made her meet him with a kind of melancholy that almost induced her to lament he was amiable, and repine that she knew none like him.

His appearance, meantime, was far different; he seemed enchanted at the sight of her, he flew eagerly to meet her, and his eyes sparkled with pleasure as he approached her; a pleasure neither moderate nor disguised, but lively, unrestrained, and expressive.

Cecilia, whose plans since she had last seen him had twice varied, who first had looked forward to being united with him for ever, and afterwards had determined to avoid with him even a common acquaintance, could not, while these thoughts were all recurring to her memory, receive much delight from observing his gaiety, or feel at all gratified by his unembarrassed manners. The openness of his attentions, and the frankness of his admiration, which hitherto had charmed her as marks of the sincerity of his character, now shocked her as proofs of the indifference of his heart,

which feeling for her a mere common regard, that affected neither his spirits nor his peace, he manifested without scruple, since it was not accompanied with even a wish beyond the present hour.

She now, too, recollected that such had always been his conduct, one single and singular moment excepted, when, as he gave to her his letter for Mr. Belfield, he seemed struck, as she was herself, by the extraordinary co-incidence of their ideas and proceedings: that emotion, however, she now regarded as casual and transitory, and seeing him so much happier than herself, she felt ashamed of her delusion, and angry at her easy captivation.

Reflections such as these, though they added fresh motives to her resolution of giving up all thoughts of his alliance, were yet so humiliating, that they robbed her of all power of receiving pleasure from what was passing, and made her forget that the place she was in was even intended for a place of entertainment.

Young Delvile, after painting in lively colours the loss his house had sustained by her quitting it, and dwelling with equal force upon the regret of his mother and his own, asked in a low voice if she would do him so much honour as to introduce him to Mr. Harrel; "As the son," added, he "of a brother guardian, I think I have a kind of claim to his acquaintance."

Cecilia could not refuse, though as the request was likely to occasion more frequent meetings, she persuaded herself she was unwilling to comply. The ceremony therefore past, and was again repeated with Mrs. Harrel, who, though she had several times seen him, had never been formally made known to him.

The Harrels were both of them much pleased at this mark of civility in a young man whose family had prepared them rather to expect his scorn, and expressed their wishes that he would drink his tea in their party; he accepted their invitation with alacrity, and turning to Cecilia, said, "Have I not skilfully timed my introduction? But though you have done me this honour with Mr. and Mrs. Harrel, I must not yet, I presume, entreat you to extend it to a certain happy gentleman of this company," glancing his eyes towards Sir Robert Floyer.

"No, sir," answered she, with quickness, "yet, nor ever!"

They were now at the door leading down stairs to the tea-room. Cecilia saw that Sir Robert, who had hitherto been engaged with some gentlemen, seemed to be seeking her: and the remembrance of the quarrel which had followed her refusal of his assistance at the Opera-house, obliged her to determine, should he offer it again, to accept it: but the same brutality which forced this intention, contributed to render it repugnant to her, and she resolved if possible to avoid him, by hurrying down stairs before he reached her. She made, therefore, a sudden attempt to slip through the crowd, and as she was light and active, she easily succeeded; but though her hasty motion separated her from the rest of her party, Delvile, who was earnestly looking at her, to discover her meaning in the disclaiming speech she made about Sir Robert, saw into her design, but suffered her not to go alone; he contrived in a moment to follow and join her, while she was stopping at the foot of the stairs for Mrs. Harrel.

"Why what a little thief you are," cried he, "to run away from us thus! what do you think Sir Robert will say? I saw him looking for you at the very instant of your flight."

"Then you saw at the same time," said Cecilia, "the reason of it."

"Will you give me leave," cried he, laughing, "to repeat this to my lord Ernolf?"

"You may repeat it, sir, if you please," said Cecilia, piqued that he had not rather thought of himself than of Lord Ernolf, "to the whole Pantheon."

"And if I should," cried he, "half of it, at least, would thank me; and to obtain the applause of so noble an assembly, what would it signify that Sir Robert should cut my throat?"

"I believe," said Cecilia, deeply mortified by a raillery that showed so little interest in her avowal of indifference, "you are determined to make me as sick of that man's name, as I am of his conversation."

"And is it possible," exclaimed Delvile, in a tone of surprise, "that such can be your opinion, and yet, situated as you are, the whole world at your command, and all mankind at your devotion——but I am answering you seriously, when you are only speaking by rule."

"What rule, sir?"

"That which young ladies, upon certain occasions, always prescribe themselves."

Here they were interrupted by the arrival of the rest of the company; though not before Cecilia had received some little consolation for her displeasure, by finding that young Delvile still supposed she was engaged, and flattering herself his language would be different were he informed of the contrary.

Morrice now undertook to procure them a table for tea, which, as the room was very full, was not easily done; and while they were waiting his success, Miss Larolles, who from the stairs had perceived Cecilia, came running up to her, and taking her hand, called out "Lord, my dear creature, who'd have thought of seeing you here? I was never so surprised in my life! I really thought you was gone into a convent, it's so extreme long since I've seen you. But, of all things in the world, why was you not at Lady Nyland's last assembly? I thought of asking Mrs. Harrel fifty times why you did not come, but it always went out of my head. You've no notion how excessively I was disappointed."

"You are very obliging," said Cecilia, laughing, "but I hope, since you so often forgot it, the disappointment did not much lessen your entertainment."

"O Lord, no! I was never so happy in my life. There was such a crowd, you could not move a finger. Everybody in the world was there. You've no idea how delightful it was. I thought verily I should have fainted with the heat."

"That was delightful indeed! And how long did you stay?"

"Why we danced till three in the morning. We began with cotillons, and finished with country dances. It was the most elegant thing you ever saw in your life; everything quite in a style. I was so monstrously fatigued, I could hardly get through the last dance. I really thought I should have dropt down dead. Only conceive dancing five hours in such a monstrous crowd! I assure you when I got home my feet were all blisters. You have no idea how they smarted."

"And whence comes it," cried young Delvile, "that *you* partake so little of these delights?"

"Because I fear," answered Cecilia, "I came too late into the school of fashion to be a ductile pupil."

"Do you know," continued Miss Larolles, "Mr. Meadows has not spoke one word to me all the evening! though I am sure he saw me, for I sat at the outside on purpose to speak to a person or two, that I knew would be strolling about; for if one sits on the inside, there's no speaking to a creature you know; so I never do it at the Opera, nor in the boxes at Ranelagh,[1] nor anywhere. It's the shockingest thing you can conceive, to be made sit in the middle of those forms; one might as well be at home, for nobody can speak to one."

"But you don't seem to have had much better success," said Cecilia, "in keeping at the outside."

"O yes I have, for I got a little chat with two or three people as they were passing, for, you know, when one sits there, they can't help saying something; though I assure you all the men are so excessively odd they don't care whether they speak to one or no. As to Mr. Meadows, he's really enough to provoke one to death. I suppose he's in one of his absent fits. However, I assure you, I think it's extreme impertinent of him, and so I shall tell Mr. Sawyer, for I know he'll make a point of telling him of it again."

"I rather think," said Cecilia, "the best would be to return the compliment in kind, and when he next recollects you, appear to have forgotten him."

"O Lord, that's a very good notion! so I will, I declare. But you can't conceive how glad I am the Concert's over; for I assure you, though I sat as near the fire as possible, I was so extreme cold you've no idea, for Mr. Meadows never would let me have the least peep at it. I declare I believe he does it on purpose to plague one, for he grows worse

[1] "Ranelagh, a place of public entertainment, built between 1740 and 1742. The chief amusement was 'promenading' (as it was called) round and round a circular area, and taking refreshments in boxes, while the orchestra executed pieces of music. It was a kind of 'Vauxhall under cover,' warmed by coal fires."—CUNNINGHAM'S *Handbook for London.*

and worse every day. You can't think how I hate him!"

"Not easily I believe indeed!" said Cecilia, archly.

"O, do but look!" resumed the fair VOLUBLE, "if there is not Mrs. Mears in her old red gown again. I begin to think she'll never have another. I wish she was to have an execution in her house, if it was only to get rid of it! I am so fatigued with the sight of it you can't conceive."

Mr. Morrice now brought intelligence that he had secured one side of a table which would very well accommodate the ladies; and that the other side was only occupied by one gentleman, who, as he was not drinking tea himself, would doubtless give up his place when the party appeared.

Miss Larolles then ran back to her own set, and the rest followed Mr. Morrice; Mrs. Harrel, Mrs. Mears and Cecilia took their places. The gentleman opposite to them proved to be Mr. Meadows: Morrice, therefore, was much deceived in his expectations, for, far from giving up his place, he had flung himself all along upon the form in such a lounging posture, while he rested one arm upon the table, that, not contented with merely keeping his own seat, he filled up a space meant for three.

Mr. Harrel had already walked off to another party: Delvile stood aloof for some minutes, expecting Sir Robert Floyer would station himself behind Cecilia; but Sir Robert, who would scarce have thought such a condescension due to a princess, disdained any appearance of assiduity, even while he made it his care to publish his pretensions: and therefore, finding no accommodation to please him, he stalked towards some gentlemen in another part of the room. Delvile then took the post he had neglected, and Mr. Arnott, who had not had courage to make any effort in his own favour, modestly stood near him. Cecilia contrived to make room for Mr. Gosport next to herself, and Morrice was sufficiently happy in being allowed to call the waiters, superintend the provisions, and serve the whole party.

The task of making tea fell upon Cecilia, who being somewhat incommoded by the vicinity of her neighbours,

Mrs. Mears called out to Mr. Meadows, "Do pray, sir, be so good as to make room for one of us at your side."

Mr. Meadows, who was indolently picking his teeth, and examining them with a tooth-pick-case glass, did not, at first, seem to hear her; and when she repeated her request, he only looked at her, and said "Umph?"

"Now really, Mr. Meadows," said she, "when you see any ladies in such distress, I wonder how you can forbear helping them."

"In distress, are you?" cried he, with a vacant smile, "pray what's the matter?"

"Don't you see? we are so crowded we can hardly sit."

"Can't you?" cried he, "upon my honour it's very shameful that these people don't contrive some seats more convenient."

"Yes," said Mrs. Mears; "but if you would be so kind as to let somebody else sit by you we should not want any contrivance."

Here Mr. Meadows was seized with a furious fit of yawning, which as much diverted Cecilia and Mr. Gosport, as it offended Mrs. Mears, who with great displeasure added, "Indeed, Mr. Meadows, it's very strange that you never hear what's said to you."

"I beg your pardon," said he, "were you speaking to me?" and again began picking his teeth.

Morrice, eager to contrast his civility with the inattention of Mr. Meadows, now flew round to the other side of the table, and calling out "let *me* help you, Miss Beverley, I can make tea better than anybody," he leant over that part of the form which Mr. Meadows had occupied with one of his feet, in order to pour it out himself: but Mr. Meadows, by an unfortunate removal of his foot, bringing him forwarder than he was prepared to go, the tea-pot and its contents were overturned immediately opposite to Cecilia.

Young Delvile, who saw the impending evil, from an impetuous impulse to prevent her suffering by it, hastily drew her back, and bending down before her, secured her preservation by receiving himself the mischief with which she was threatened.

Mrs. Mears and Mrs. Harrel vacated their seats in a

moment, and Mr. Gosport and Mr. Arnott assisted in clearing the table, and removing Cecilia, who was very slightly hurt, and at once surprised, ashamed and pleased at the manner in which she had been saved.

Young Delvile, though a sufferer from his gallantry, the hot water having penetrated through his coat to his arm and shoulder, was at first insensible to his situation, from an apprehension that Cecilia had not wholly escaped: and his enquiries were so eager and so anxious, made with a look of such solicitude, and a voice of such alarm, that, equally astonished and gratified, she secretly blessed the accident which had given birth to his uneasiness, however she grieved for its consequence to himself.

But no sooner was he satisfied of her safety, than he felt himself obliged to retire; yet attributing to inconvenience what was really the effect of pain, he hurried away with an appearance of sport, saying, "There is something, I must own, rather *unknightly* in quitting the field for a wet jacket, but the company, I hope, will only give me credit for flying away to Ranelagh. So

> 'Like a brave general after being beat,
> I'll exult and rejoice in a prudent retreat.'"[1]

He then hastened to his carriage: and poor Morrice, frightened and confounded at the disaster he had occasioned, sneaked after him with much less ceremony. While Mr. Meadows, wholly unconcerned by the distress and confusion around him, sat quietly picking his teeth, and looking on during the whole transaction, with an unmeaning stare, that made it doubtful whether he had even perceived it.

Order being now soon restored, the ladies finished their tea, and went up stairs. Cecilia, to whom the late accident had afforded much new and interesting matter for reflection, wished immediately to have returned home, but she was not the leader of the party, and therefore could not make the proposal.

They then strolled through all the apartments, and having walked about till the fashionable time of retiring,

[1] Smart.—*Author's note.*

they were joined by Sir Robert Floyer, and proceeded to the little room near the entrance to the great one, in order to wait for their carriages.

Here Cecilia again met Miss Larolles, who came to make various remarks, and infinite ridicule, upon sundry unfashionable or uncostly articles in the dresses of the surrounding company; as well as to complain, with no little resentment, that Mr. Meadows was again standing before the fire!

Captain Aresby also advanced to tell her he was quite *abattu* by having so long lost sight of her, to hope she *would make a renounce* of mortifying the world by discarding it, and to protest he had waited for his carriage till he was actually upon the point of being *accablé*.

In the midst of this *jargon*, to which the fulness of Cecilia's mind hardly permitted her to listen, there suddenly appeared at the door of the apartment, Mr. Albany, who, with his usual austerity of countenance, stopt to look round upon the company.

"Do you see," cried Mr. Gosport to Cecilia, "who approaches? your poor *sycophants* will again be taken to task, and I, for one, tremble at the coming storm!"

"O Lord," cried Miss Larolles, "I wish I was safe in my chair! that man always frightens me out of my senses. You've no notion what disagreeable things he says to one. I assure you I've no doubt but he's crazy: and I'm always in the shockingest fright in the world for fear he should be taken with a fit while I'm near him."

"It is really a petrifying thing," said the Captain, "that one can go to no *spectacle* without the *horreur* of being *obsedé* by that person! if he comes this way, I shall certainly make a renounce, and retire."

"Why so?" said Sir Robert, "what the d—l do you mind him for?"

"O, he is the greatest bore in nature!" cried the Captain, "and I always do *mon possible* to avoid him; for he breaks out into such barbarous phrases, that I find myself *degouté* with him in a moment."

"O, I assure you," said Miss Larolles, "he attacks one sometimes in a manner you've no idea. One day he came up to me all of a sudden, and asked me what good I

thought I did by dressing so much? Only conceive how shocking!"

"O, I have had the *horreur* of questions of that sort from him *sans fin*," said the Captain. "Once he took the liberty to ask me, what service I was of to the world? and another time, he desired me to inform him whether I had ever made any poor person pray for me? And, in short, he has so frequently inconvenienced me by his impertinences, that he really bores me to a degree."

"That's just the thing that makes him hunt you down," said Sir Robert; "if he were to ask me questions for a month together, I should never trouble myself to move a muscle."

"The matter of his discourse," said Mr. Gosport, "is not more singular than the manner; for without any seeming effort or consciousness, he runs into blank verse perpetually. I have made much enquiry about him, but all I am able to learn, is, that he was certainly confined, at one part of his life, in a private mad-house: and though now, from not being mischievous, he is set at liberty, his looks, language, and whole behaviour, announce the former injury of his intellects."

"O Lord," cried Miss Larolles, half screaming, "what shocking notions you put in one's head! I declare I dare say I sha'n't get safe home for him, for I assure you I believe he's taken a spite to me! and all because one day, before I knew of his odd ways, I happened to fall a laughing at his going about in that old coat. Do you know it put him quite in a passion! only conceive how ill-natured!"

"O, he has distressed me," exclaimed the Captain, with a shrug, "*partout!* and found so much fault with every thing I have done, that I should really be glad to have the honour to cut, for the moment he comes up to me, I know what I have to expect!"

"But I must tell you," cried Miss Larolles, "how monstrously he put me in a fright one evening when I was talking with Miss Moffat. Do you know, he came up to us, and asked what we were saying! and because we could not think in a minute of something to answer him, he said he supposed we were only talking some scandal, and so we had better go home, and employ ourselves in working for

the poor! Only think how horrid! and after that, he was so excessive impertinent in his remarks, there was quite no bearing him. I assure you he cut me up so you've no notion."

Here Mr. Albany advanced; and everybody but Sir Robert moved out of the way.

Fixing his eyes upon Cecilia, with an expression *more in sorrow than in anger*, after contemplating her some time in silence, he exclaimed, "Ah, lovely, but perishable flower! how long will that ingenuous countenance, wearing, because wanting no disguise, look responsive of the whiteness of the region within? How long will that air of innocence irradiate your whole appearance? unspoilt by prosperity, unperverted by power! pure in the midst of surrounding depravity! unsullied in the tainted air of infectious perdition!"

The confusion of Cecilia at this public address, which drew upon her the eyes and attention of all the company, was inexpressible; she arose from her seat, covered with blushes, and saying, "I fancy the carriage must be ready," pressed forward to quit the room, followed by Sir Robert, who answered, "No, no, they'll call it when it comes up. Arnott, will you go and see where it is?"

Cecilia stopt, but whispered Mrs. Harrel to stand near her.

"And whither," cried Albany, indignantly, "whither wouldst thou go? Art thou already disdainful of my precepts? and canst thou not one short moment spare from the tumultuous folly which encircles thee? Many and many are the hours thou mayst spend with such as these; the world, alas! is full of them; weary not then, so soon, of an old man that would admonish thee,—he cannot call upon thee long, for soon he will be called upon himself."

This solemn exhortation extremely distressed her; and fearing to still further offend him by making another effort to escape, she answered in a low voice, "I will not only hear, but thank you for your precepts, if you will forbear to give them before so many witnesses."

"Whence," cried he, sternly, "these vain and superficial distinctions? Do you not dance in public? What renders you more conspicuous? Do you not dress to be admired, and walk to be observed? Why, then, this fantastical

scruple, unjustified by reason, unsupported by analogy? Is folly only to be published? Is vanity alone to be exhibited? Oh, slaves of senseless contradiction! Oh, feeble followers of yet feebler prejudice! daring to be wicked, yet fearing to be wise; dauntless in levity, yet shrinking from the name of virtue!"

The latter part of this speech, during which he turned with energy to the whole company, raised such a general alarm, that all the ladies hastily quitted the room, and all the gentlemen endeavoured to enter it, equally curious to see the man who made the oration, and the lady to whom it was addressed. Cecilia, therefore, found her situation insupportable; "I must go," she cried, "whether there is a carriage or not! Pray, Mrs. Harrel, let us go!"

Sir Robert then offered to take her hand, which she was extremely ready to give him; but, while the crowd made their passage difficult, Albany, following and stopping her, said, "What is it you fear? a miserable old man, worn out by the sorrows of that experience from which he offers you counsel? What, too, is it you trust? a libertine wretch, coveting nothing but your wealth, for the gift of which he will repay you by the perversion of your principles!"

"What the d—l do you mean by that?" cried the baronet.

"To show," answered he, austerely, "the inconsistency of false delicacy; to show how those who are too timid for truth, can fearless meet licentiousness."

"For heaven's sake, sir," cried Cecilia, "say no more to me now! Call upon me in Portman-square when you please,—reprove me in whatever you think me blameable, I shall be grateful for your instructions, and bettered, perhaps, by your care;—but lessons and notice thus public can do me nothing but injury."

"How happy," cried he, "were no other injury near thee! spotless were then the hour of thy danger; bright, fair, and refulgent thy passage to security! the Good would receive thee with praise, the Guilty would supplicate thy prayers, the Poor would follow thee with blessings, and Children would be taught by thy example!"[1]

[1] "Friday.—I dined with Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson, who was very comic and good-humoured. Susan Thrale had just had her hair turned

He then quitted her, everybody making way as he moved, and proceeded into the great room. Mrs. Harrel's carriage being also announced at the same time, Cecilia lost not an instant in hastening away.

Sir Robert, as he conducted her, disdainfully laughed at the adventure, which the general licence allowed to Mr. Albany prevented his resenting, and which therefore he scorned to appear moved at.

Mrs. Harrel could talk of nothing else, neither was Cecilia disposed to change the subject, for the remains of insanity which seemed to hang upon him were affecting without being alarming, and her desire to know more of him grew every instant stronger.

This desire, however, outlived not the conversation to which it gave rise; when she returned to her own room, no vestige of it remained upon her mind, which a nearer concern and deeper interest wholly occupied.

The behaviour of young Delvile had pained, pleased, and disturbed her. His activity to save her from mischief might proceed merely from gallantry or good nature; upon that, therefore, she dwelt little: but his eagerness, his anxiety, his insensibility to himself, were more than good breeding could claim, and seemed to spring from a motive less artificial.

She now, therefore, believed that her partiality was returned; and this belief had power to shake all her resolves, and enfeeble all her objections. The arrogance of Mr.

up, and powdered, and has taken to the womanly robe. Dr. Johnson sportively gave her instructions how to increase her consequence, and to 'take upon her' properly. 'Begin,' said he, 'Miss Susy, with something grand—something to surprise mankind! Let your first essay in life be a warm censure of "Cecilia." You can no way make yourself more conspicuous. Tell the world how ill it was conceived, and how ill executed. Tell them how little there is in it of human nature, and how well your knowledge of the world enables you to judge of the failings in that book. Find fault without fear; and if you are at a loss for any to find, invent whatever comes into your mind, for you may say what you please, with little fear of detection, since of those who praise "Cecilia" not half have read it, and of those who have read it, not half remember it. Go to work, therefore, boldly; and particularly mark that the character of Albany is extremely unnatural, to your own knowledge, since you never met with such a man at Mrs. Cummyn's school.'"—*Diary of Mdme. D'Arblay*, p. 214, vol. ii.

Delvile lessened in her reflections, the admonitions of Mr. Monckton abated in their influence. With the first she considered that though connected she need not live; and for the second, though she acknowledged the excellence of his judgment, she concluded him wholly ignorant of her sentiments of Delvile; which she imagined, when once revealed, would make every obstacle to the alliance seem trifling, when put in competition with mutual esteem and affection.

CHAPTER III.

A REPROOF.

THE attention of Cecilia to her own affairs, did not make her forgetful of those of the Harrels: and the morning after the busy day which was last recorded, as soon as she quitted the breakfast-room, she began a note to Mr. Monckton, but was interrupted with information that he was already in the house.

She went to him immediately, and had the satisfaction of finding him alone: but desirous as she was to relate to him the transactions of the preceding day, there was in his countenance a gravity so unusual, that her impatience was involuntarily checked, and she waited first to hear if he had himself any thing to communicate.

He kept her not long in suspense; "Miss Beverley," he said, "I bring you intelligence which, though I know you will be very sorry to hear, it is absolutely necessary should be told you immediately: you may otherwise, from however laudable motives, be drawn into some action which you may repent for life."

"What now!" cried Cecilia, much alarmed.

"All that I suspected," said he, "and more than I hinted to you, is true; Mr. Harrel is a ruined man! he is not worth a groat, and he is in debt beyond what he ever possessed."

Cecilia made no answer: she knew but too fatally the desperate state of his affairs, yet that *his debts were more than he had ever possessed*, she had not thought possible.

"My enquiries," continued he, "have been among principals, and such as would not dare deceive me. I hastened, therefore, to you, that this timely notice might enforce the injunctions I gave you when I had the pleasure of seeing you last, and prevent a misjudging generosity from leading you into any injury of your own fortune, for a man who is past all relief from it, and who cannot be saved, even though you were to be destroyed for his sake."

"You are very good," said Cecilia, "but your counsel is now too late!" She then briefly acquainted him with what passed, and with how large a sum she had parted.

He heard her with rage, amazement, and horror: and after inveighing against Mr. Harrel in the bitterest terms, he said, "But why, before you signed your name to so base an imposition, could you not send for me?"

"I wished, I meant to have done it," cried she, "but I thought the time past when you could help me. How, indeed, could you have saved me? my word was given, given with an oath the most solemn, and the first I have ever taken in my life."

"An oath so forced," answered he, "the most delicate conscience would have absolved you from performing. You have, indeed, been grossly imposed upon; and pardon me if I add, unaccountably to blame. Was it not obvious that relief so circumstanced must be temporary? If his ruin had been any thing less than certain, what tradesman would have been so insolent? You have therefore deprived yourself of the power of doing good to a worthier object, merely to grant a longer date to extravagance and villainy."

"Yet how," cried Cecilia, deeply touched by this reproof, "how could I do otherwise? Could I see a man in the agonies of despair, hear him first darkly hint his own destruction, and afterwards behold him almost in the very act of suicide, the instrument of self-murder in his desperate hand—and yet, though he put his life in my power, though he told me I could preserve him, and told me he had no other reliance or resource, could I leave him to his dreadful despondence, refuse my assisting hand to raise him from perdition, and, to save what, after all, I am well able to spare, suffer a fellow-creature, who flung himself upon my mercy, to offer up his last accounts with an action

blacker than any which had preceded it?—No, I cannot repent what I have done, though I lament, indeed, that the object was not more deserving."

"Your representation," said Mr. Monckton, "like every thing else that I ever heard you utter, breathes nothing but benevolence and goodness: but your pity has been abused, and your understanding imposed upon. Mr. Harrel had no intention to destroy himself; the whole was an infamous trick, which, had not your generosity been too well known, would never have been played."

"I cannot think quite so ill of him," said Cecilia, "nor for the world would I have risked my own future reproaches by trusting to such a suspicion, which, had it proved wrong, and had Mr. Harrel, upon my refusal, committed the fatal deed, would have made his murder upon my own conscience rest for ever! Surely the experiment would have been too hazardous, when the consequence had all my future peace in its power."

"It is impossible not to revere your scruples," said Mr. Monckton, "even while I consider them as causeless; for causeless they undoubtedly were: the man who could act so atrocious a part, who could so scandalously pillage a young lady who was his guest and his ward, take advantage of her temper for the plunder of her fortune, and extort her compliance by the basest and most dishonourable arts, meant only to terrify her into a compliance; for he can be nothing less than a downright and thorough scoundrel, capable of every species of mean villainy."

He then protested he would at least acquaint her other guardians with what had passed, whose business it would be to enquire if there was any chance of redress.

Cecilia, however, had not much trouble in combating this proposal; for though her objections, which were merely those of punctilious honour and delicacy, weighed nothing with a man who regarded them as absurdities, yet his own apprehensions of appearing too officious in her affairs, forced him, after a little deliberation, to give up the design.

"Besides," said Cecilia, "as I have his bond for what I have parted with, I have, at least, no right to complain, unless, after he receives his rents, he refuses to pay me."

"His bonds! his rents!" exclaimed Mr. Monckton; "what is a man's bond who is not worth a guinea? and what are his rents, when all he ever owned must be sold before they are due, and when he will not himself receive a penny from the sale, as he has neither land, house, nor possession of any sort that is not mortgaged?"

"Nay, then," said Cecilia, "if so, it is indeed all over! I am sorry, I am grieved!—but it is past, and nothing, therefore, remains, but that I try to forget I ever was richer!"

"This is very youthful philosophy," said Mr. Monckton; "but it will not lessen your regret hereafter, when the value of money is better known to you."

"If I shall dearly buy my experience," said Cecilia, "let me be the more attentive to making good use of it; and, since my loss seems irremediable to myself, let me at least endeavour to secure its utility to Mr. Harrel."

She then told him her wish to propose to that gentleman some scheme of reformation, while yesterday's events were yet recent in his mind: but Mr. Monckton, who had hardly patience to hear her, exclaimed, "He is a wretch, and deserves the full force of the disgrace he is courting. What is now most necessary is to guard you from his further machinations, for you may else be involved in ruin as deep as his own. He now knows the way to frighten you, and he will not fail to put it in practice."

"No, sir," answered Cecilia; "he would vainly apply to me in future: I cannot repent that I ventured not yesterday to brave his menaces; but too little is the comfort I feel from what I have bestowed, to suffer any consideration to make me part with more."

"Your resolution," answered he, "will be as feeble as your generosity will be potent: depend nothing upon yourself, but instantly quit his house. You will else be made responsible for every debt that he contracts; and whatever may be his difficulties hereafter, he will know that to extricate himself from them, he has but to talk of dying, and to show you a sword or a pistol."

"If so, then," said Cecilia, looking down while she spoke, "I suppose I must again go to Mr. Delvile's."

This was by no means the purpose of Mr. Monckton,

who saw not more danger to her fortune with one of her guardians, than to her person with the other. He ventured, therefore, to recommend to her a residence with Mr. Briggs, well knowing that his house would be a security against her seeing any man equal to himself, and hoping that under his roof he might again be as unrivalled in her opinion and esteem, as he formerly was in the country.

But here the opposition of Cecilia was too earnest for any hope that it might be surmounted; for, added to her dislike of Mr. Briggs, her repugnance to such a habitation was strongly, though silently encreased, by her secret inclination to return to St. James's square.

"I mention not Mr. Briggs as an eligible host," said Mr. Monckton, after listening to her objections, "but merely as one more proper for you than Mr. Delvile, with whom your fixing at present would be but ill thought of in the world."

"Ill thought of, sir? Why so?"

"Because he has a son; for whose sake alone it would be universally concluded you changed your abode: and to give any pretence for such a report, would by no means accord with the usual delicacy of your conduct."

Cecilia was confounded by this speech: the truth of the charge she felt, and the probability of the censure she did not dare dispute.

He then gave her a thousand exhortations to beware of the schemes and artifices of Mr. Harrel, which he foresaw would be innumerable. He told her, too, that with respect to Sir Robert Floyer, he thought she had better suffer the report to subside of itself, which in time it must necessarily do, than give to it so much consequence as to send a message to the baronet, from which he might pretend to infer that hitherto she had been wavering, or she would have sent to him sooner.

But the real motive of this advice was, that as he found Sir Robert by no means to be dreaded, he hoped the report, if generally circulated and credited, might keep off other pretenders, and intimidate or deceive young Delvile.

The purport for which Cecilia had wished this conference was, however, wholly unanswered. Mr. Monckton,

enraged by the conduct of Mr. Harrel, refused to talk of his affairs, and could only mention him with detestation: but Cecilia, less severe in her judgment, and more tender in her heart, would not yet give up the hope of an amendment she so anxiously wished; and having now no other person to whom she could apply, determined to consult with Mr. Arnott, whose affection for his sister would give him a zeal in the affair that might somewhat supply the place of superior abilities.

There was, indeed, no time to be lost in making the projected attempt; for no sooner was the immediate danger of suffering removed, than the alarm wore away, and the penitence was forgotten; everything went on as usual, no new regulations were made, no expenses abated, no pleasures forborn, not a thought of hereafter admitted: and ruinous and terrible as had been the preceding storm, no trace of it was visible in the serenity of the present calm.

An occasion of discussion with Mr. Arnott very speedily offered. Mr. Harrel said he had observed in the looks of his friends at the Pantheon much surprise at the sight of him, and declared he should take yet another measure for removing all suspicion. This was to give a splendid entertainment at his own house to all his acquaintance, to which he meant to invite everybody of any consequence he had ever seen, and almost everybody he had ever heard of in his life.

Levity so unfeeling, and a spirit of extravagance so irreclaimable, were hopeless prognostics; yet Cecilia would not desist from her design. She therefore took the earliest opportunity of speaking with Mr. Arnott upon the subject, when she openly expressed her uneasiness at the state of his brother's affairs, and warmly acknowledged her displeasure at his dissipated way of life.

Mr. Arnott soon showed that example was all he wanted to declare the same sentiments. He owned he had long disapproved the conduct of Mr. Harrel, and trembled at the situation of his sister. They then considered what it was possible to propose that might retrieve their affairs, and concluded that entirely to quit London for some years, was the only chance that remained of saving them from absolute destruction.

Mr. Arnott, therefore, though fearfully, and averse to the task, told his sister their mutual advice. She thanked him, said she was much obliged to him, and would certainly consider his proposal, and mention it to Mr. Harrel. —Parties of pleasure, however, intervened, and the promise was neglected.

Cecilia then again spoke herself. Mrs. Harrel, much softened by her late acts of kindness, was no longer offended by her interference, but contented herself with confessing that she quite hated the country, and could only bear to live in it in summer time. And when Cecilia very earnestly expostulated on the weakness of such an objection to a step absolutely necessary for her future safety and happiness, she said, *she could do no worse than that if already ruined*, and therefore that she thought *it would be very hard to expect from her such a sacrifice beforehand.*

It was in vain Cecilia remonstrated: Mrs. Harrel's love of pleasure was stronger than her understanding; and therefore, though she listened to her with patience, she concluded with the same answer she had begun.

Cecilia then, though almost heartless, resolved upon talking with Mr. Harrel himself: and therefore, taking an opportunity which he had not time to elude, she ingenuously told him her opinion of his danger, and of the manner in which it might be avoided.

He paid unusual attention to her advice, but said she was much mistaken with respect to his affairs, which he believed he should now very speedily retrieve, as he had had the preceding night an uncommon *run of luck*, and flattered himself with being able very shortly to pay all his debts, and begin the world again upon a new score.

This open confession of gaming was but a new shock to Cecilia, who scrupled not to represent to him the uncertainty of so hazardous a reliance, and the inevitable evils of so destructive a practice.

She made not, however, the least impression upon his mind; he assured her he doubted not giving her shortly a good account of himself, and that living in the country was a resource of desperation which need not be anticipated.

Cecilia, though grieved and provoked by their mutual

folly and blindness, could proceed no further: advice and admonition she spared not, but authority she had none to use. She regretted her ineffectual attempt to Mr. Arnott, who was yet more cruelly afflicted at it; but though they conversed upon the subject by every opportunity, they were equally unable to relate any success from their efforts, or to devise any plan more likely to ensure it.

CHAPTER IV.

A MISTAKE.

MEANTIME young Delvile failed not to honour Cecilia's introduction of him to Mr. Harrel, by waiting upon that gentleman as soon as the ill effects of his accident at the Pantheon permitted him to leave his own house. Mr. Harrel, though just going out when he called, was desirous of being upon good terms with his family, and therefore took him up stairs to present him to his lady, and invited him to tea and cards the next evening.

Cecilia, who was with Mrs. Harrel, did not see him without emotion; which was not much lessened by the task of thanking him for his assistance at the Pantheon, and enquiring how he had himself fared. No sign, however, of emotion appeared in return, either when he first addressed, or afterwards answered her: the look of solicitude with which she had been so much struck when they last parted was no longer discernible, and the voice of sensibility which had removed all her doubts, was no longer to be heard. His general ease and natural gaiety were again unruffled; and though he had never seemed really indifferent to her, there was not the least appearance of any added partiality.

Cecilia felt an involuntary mortification as she observed this change: yet, upon reflection, she still attributed his whole behaviour to his mistake with respect to her situation, and therefore was but the more gratified by the preference he occasionally betrayed.

The invitation for the next evening was accepted; and Cecilia, for once, felt no repugnance to joining the company.

Young Delvile again was in excellent spirits; but though his chief pleasure was evidently derived from conversing with her, she had the vexation to observe that he seemed to think her the undoubted property of the baronet, always retreating when he approached, and as careful, when next her, to yield his place if he advanced, as, when he was distant, to guard it from all others.

But when Sir Robert was employed at cards, all scruples ceasing, he neglected not to engross her almost wholly. He was eager to speak to her of the affairs of Mr. Belfield, which he told her wore now a better aspect. The letter, indeed, of recommendation which he had shown to her, had failed, as the nobleman to whom it was written had already entered into an engagement for his son; but he had made application elsewhere, which he believed would be successful; and he had communicated his proceedings to Mr. Belfield, whose spirits, he hoped, would recover by this prospect of employment and advantage. "It is, however, but too true," he added, "that I have rather obtained his consent to the steps I am taking, than his approbation of them: nor do I believe, had I previously consulted him, I should have had even that. Disappointed in his higher views, his spirit is broken, and he is heartless and hopeless, scarce condescending to accept relief, from the bitter remembrance that he expected preferment. Time, however, will blunt this acute sensibility, and reflection will make him blush at this unreasonable delicacy. But we must patiently sooth him till he is more himself; or, while we mean to serve, we shall only torment him. Sickness, sorrow, and poverty have all fallen heavily upon him, and they have all fallen at once: we must not, therefore, wonder to find him intractable, when his mind is as much depressed, as his body is enervated."

Cecilia, to whom his candour and generosity always gave fresh delight, strengthened his opinions by her concurrence, and confirmed his designs by the interest which she took in them.

From this time, he found almost daily some occasion for calling in Portman-square. The application of Cecilia in favour of Mr. Belfield, gave him a right to communicate to her all his proceedings concerning him; and he had

some letter to show, some new scheme to propose, some refusal to lament, or some hope to rejoice over, almost perpetually: or even when these failed, Cecilia had a cold, which he came to enquire after, or Mrs. Harrel gave him an invitation, which rendered any excuse unnecessary. But though his intimacy with Cecilia was encreased, though his admiration of her was conspicuous, and his fondness for her society seemed to grow with the enjoyment of it, he yet never manifested any doubt of her engagement with the baronet, nor betrayed either intention or desire to supplant him. Cecilia, however, repined not much at the mistake, since she thought it might be instrumental to procuring her a more impartial acquaintance with his character, than she could rationally expect, if, as she hoped, the explanation of his error should make him seek her good opinion with more study and design.

To satisfy herself not only concerning the brother but the sister, she again visited Miss Belfield, and had the pleasure of finding her in better spirits, and hearing that the *noble friend* of her brother, whom she had already mentioned, and whom Cecilia had before suspected to be young Delvile, had now pointed out to him a method of conduct by which his affairs might be decently retrieved, and himself creditably employed. Miss Belfield spoke of the plan with the highest satisfaction; yet she acknowledged that her mother was extremely discontented with it, and that her brother himself was rather led by shame than inclination to its adoption. Yet he was evidently easier in his mind, though far from happy, and already so much better, that Mr. Rupil said he would very soon be able to leave his room.

Such was the quiet and contented situation of Cecilia, when one evening, which was destined for company at home, while she was alone in the drawing-room, which Mrs. Harrel had just left to answer a note, Sir Robert Floyer accidentally came up stairs before the other gentlemen.

"Ha!" cried he, the moment he saw her, "at last have I the good fortune to meet with you alone! This, indeed, is a favour I thought I was always to be denied."

He was then approaching her; but Cecilia, who shrunk involuntary at the sight of him, was retreating hastily to

quit the room, when suddenly recollecting that no better opportunity might ever offer for a final explanation with him, she irresolutely stopt; and Sir Robert, immediately following, took her hand, and pressing it to his lips as she endeavoured to withdraw it, exclaimed, "You are a most charming creature!" when the door was opened, and young Delvile at the same moment was announced and appeared.

Cecilia, colouring violently, and extremely chagrined, hastily disengaged herself from his hold. Delvile seemed uncertain whether he ought not to retire, which Sir Robert perceiving, bowed to him with an air of mingled triumph and vexation, and said, "Sir, your most obedient!"

The doubt, however, in which everyone appeared of what was next to be done, was immediately removed by the return of Mrs. Harrel, and the arrival at almost the same moment of more company.

The rest of the evening was spent, on the part of Cecilia, most painfully: the explanation she had planned had ended in worse than nothing, for by suffering the baronet to detain her, she had rather shown a disposition to oblige, than any intention to discard him; and the situation in which she had been surprised by young Delvile, was the last to clear the suspicions she so little wished him to harbour: while, on his part, the accident seemed to occasion no other alteration than that of rendering him more than usually assiduous to give way to Sir Robert whenever he approached her.

Nor was Sir Robert slack in taking advantage of this attention: he was highly in spirits, talked to her with more than common freedom, and wore the whole evening an air of exulting satisfaction.

Cecilia, provoked by this presumption, hurt by the behaviour of young Delvile, and mortified by the whole affair, determined to leave this mistake no longer in the power of accident, but to apply immediately to Mr. Delvile senior, and desire him, as her guardian, to wait upon Sir Robert himself, and acquaint him that his perseverance in pursuing her was both useless and offensive: and by this method she hoped at once to disentangle herself for ever from the baronet, and to discover more fully the sentiments of young

Delvile: for the provocation she had just endured, robbed her of all patience for waiting the advice of Mr. Monckton.

CHAPTER V.

AN EXPLANATION.

THE following morning, therefore, Cecilia went early to St. James's-square: and, after the usual ceremonies of messages and long waiting, she was shown into an apartment where she found Mr. Delvile and his son.

She rejoiced to see them together, and determined to make known to them both the purport of her visit: and therefore, after some apologies, and a little hesitation, she told Mr. Delvile, that encouraged by his offers of serving her, she had taken the liberty to call upon him with a view to entreat his assistance.

Young Delvile, immediately arising, would have quitted the room; but Cecilia, assuring him she rather desired what she had to say should be known than kept secret, begged that he would not disturb himself.

Delvile, pleased with this permission to hear her, and curious to know what would follow, very readily returned to his seat.

"I should by no means," she continued, "have thought of proclaiming even to the most intimate of my friends, the partiality which Sir Robert Floyer has been pleased to show me, had he left to me the choice of publishing or concealing it: but, on the contrary, his own behaviour seems intended not merely to display it, but to insinuate that it meets with my approbation. Mr. Harrel, also, urged by too much warmth of friendship, has encouraged this belief; nor, indeed, do I know at present where the mistake stops, nor what it is report has not scrupled to affirm. But I think I ought no longer to neglect it, and therefore I have presumed to solicit your advice in what manner I may most effectually contradict it."

The extreme surprise of young Delvile at this speech was not more evident than pleasant to Cecilia, to whom it

accounted for all that had perplext her in his conduct, while it animated every expectation she wished to encourage.

"The behaviour of Mr. Harrel," answered Mr. Delvile, "has by no means been such as to lead me to forget that his father was the son of a steward of Mr. Grant, who lived in the neighbourhood of my friend and relation the Duke of Derwent: nor can I sufficiently congratulate myself that I have always declined acting with him. The late Dean, indeed, never committed so strange an impropriety as that of nominating Mr. Harrel and Mr. Briggs coadjutors with Mr. Delvile. The impropriety, however, though extremely offensive to me, has never obliterated from my mind the esteem I bore the Dean: nor can I possibly give a greater proof of it than the readiness I have always shown to offer my counsel and instruction to his niece. Mr. Harrel, therefore, ought certainly to have desired Sir Robert Floyer to acquaint me with his proposals before he gave to him any answer."

"Undoubtedly, sir," said Cecilia, willing to shorten this parading harangue, "but as he neglected that attention, will you think me too impertinent should I entreat the favour of you to speak with Sir Robert yourself, and explain to him the total inefficacy of his pursuit, since my determination against him is unalterable?"

Here the conference was interrupted by the entrance of a servant who said something to Mr. Delvile, which occasioned his apologizing to Cecilia for leaving her for a few moments, and ostentatiously assuring her that no business, however important, should prevent his thinking of her affairs, or detain him from returning to her as soon as possible.

The astonishment of young Delvile at the strength of her last expression kept him silent for some time after his father left the room: and then, with a countenance that still marked his amazement, he said, "Is it possible, Miss Beverley, that I should twice have been thus egregiously deceived; or rather, that the whole town, and even the most intimate of your friends, should so unaccountably have persisted in a mistake?"

"For the town," answered Cecilia, "I know not how it

can have had any concern in so small a matter; but for my intimate friends, I have too few to make it probable they should ever have been so strangely misinformed."

"Pardon me," cried he, "it was from one who ought to know, that I had myself the intelligence."

"I entreat you, then," said Cecilia, "to acquaint me who it was?"

"Mr. Harrel himself; who communicated it to a lady in my hearing, and at a public place."

Cecilia cast up her eyes in wonder and indignation at a proof so incontrovertible of his falsehood, but made not any answer.

"Even yet," continued he, "I can scarcely feel undeceived: your engagement seemed so positive, your connexion so irretrievable,—so,—so *fixed*, I mean.—" He hesitated, a little embarrassed; but then suddenly exclaimed, "Yet whence, if to *neither* favourable, if indifferent alike to Sir Robert and to Belfield, whence that animated apprehension for their safety at the Opera-house? whence that never to be forgotten, *Oh stop him! good God! will nobody stop him?*—Words of anxiety so tender! and sounds that still vibrate in my ear!"

Cecilia, struck with amazement in her turn at the strength of his own expressions, blushed, and for a few minutes hesitated how to answer him: but then, to leave nothing that related to so disagreeable a report in any doubt, she resolved to tell him ingenuously the circumstances that had occasioned her alarm: and therefore, though with some pain to her modesty, she confessed her fears that she had herself provoked the affront, though her only view had been to discountenance Sir Robert, without meaning to show any distinction to Mr. Belfield.

Delvile, who seemed charmed with the candour of this explanation, said, when she had finished it, "You are then at liberty?——Ah, madam!—how many may rue so dangerous a discovery!"

"Could you think," said Cecilia, endeavouring to speak with her usual ease, "that Sir Robert Floyer would be found so irresistible?"

"Oh no!" cried he, "far otherwise; a thousand times I have wondered at his happiness; a thousand times, when

I have looked at you, and listened to you, I have thought it impossible !—yet my authority seemed indisputable. And how was I to discredit what was not uttered as a conjecture, but asserted as a fact? asserted, too, by the guardian with whom you lived? and not hinted as a secret, but affirmed as a point settled?"

"Yet, surely," said Cecilia, "you have heard me make use of expressions that could not but lead you to suppose there was some mistake, whatever might be the authority which had won your belief."

"No," answered he, "I never supposed any mistake, though sometimes I thought you repented your engagement. I concluded, indeed, you had been unwarily drawn in, and I have even, at times, been tempted to acknowledge my suspicions to you, state your independence, and exhort you——as a *friend*, exhort you—to use it with spirit, and, if you were shackled unwillingly, incautiously, or unworthily, to break the chains by which you were confined, and restore to yourself that freedom of choice, upon the use of which all your happiness must ultimately depend. But I doubted if this were honourable to the baronet,—and what, indeed, was my right to such a liberty? none that every man might not be proud of, a wish to do honour to myself, under the officious pretence of serving the most amiable of women."

"Mr. Harrel," said Cecilia, "has been so strangely biggotted to his friend, that in his eagerness to manifest his regard for him, he seems to have forgotten every other consideration; he would not, else, have spread so widely a report that could so ill stand enquiry."

"If Sir Robert," returned he, "is himself deceived while he deceives others, who can forbear to pity him? for my own part, instead of repining that hitherto I have been mistaken, ought I not rather to bless an error that may have been my preservative from danger?"

Cecilia, distressed in what manner to support her part in the conversation, began now to wish the return of Mr. Delvile; and, not knowing what else to say, she expressed her surprise at his long absence.

"It is not, indeed, well timed," said young Delvile, "just now,—at the moment when—" he stopt, and presently ex-

claiming "Oh dangerous interval!" he arose from his seat in manifest disorder.

Cecilia arose too, and hastily ringing the bell, said, "Mr. Delvile I am sure is detained, and therefore I will order my chair, and call another time."

"Do I frighten you away?" said he, assuming ar appearance more placid.

"No," answered she, "but I would not hasten Mr. Delvile."

A servant then came, and said the chair was ready.

She would immediately have followed him, but young Delvile again speaking, she stopt a moment to hear him. "I fear," said he, with much hesitation, "I have strangely exposed myself——and that you cannot—but the extreme astonishment—" he stopt again, in the utmost confusion, and then adding, "you will permit me to attend you to the chair," he handed her down stairs, and in quitting her, bowed without saying a word more.

Cecilia, who was almost wholly indifferent to every part of the explanation but that which had actually passed, was now in a state of felicity more delightful than any she had ever experienced. She had not a doubt remaining of her influence over the mind of young Delvile, and the surprise which had made him rather betray than express his regard, was infinitely more flattering and satisfactory to her than any formal or direct declaration. She had now convinced him she was disengaged, and in return, though without seeming to intend it, he had convinced her of the deep interest which he took in the discovery. His perturbation, the words which escaped him, and his evident struggle to say no more, were proofs just such as she wished to receive of his partial admiration, since, while they satisfied her heart, they also soothed her pride, by showing a diffidence of success which assured her that her own secret was still sacred, and that no weakness or inadvertency on her part had robbed her of the power of mingling dignity with the frankness with which she meant to receive his addresses. All, therefore, that now employed her care, was to keep off any indissoluble engagement till each should be better known to the other.

For this reserve, however, she had less immediate occa-

sion than she expected; she saw no more of young Delvile that day; neither did he appear the next. The third she fully expected him,—but still he came not. And while she wondered at an absence so uncommon, she received a note from Lord Ernolf, to beg permission to wait upon her for two minutes, at any time she would appoint.

She readily sent word that she should be at home for the rest of the day, as she wished much for an opportunity of immediately finishing every affair but one, and setting her mind at liberty to think only of that which she desired should prosper.

Lord Ernolf was with her in half an hour. She found him sensible and well bred, extremely desirous to promote her alliance with his son, and apparently as much pleased with herself as with her fortune. He acquainted her that he had addressed himself to Mr. Harrel long since, but had been informed that she was actually engaged to Sir Robert Floyer: he should, therefore, have forborn taking up any part of her time, had he not, the preceding day, while on a visit at Mr. Delvile's, been assured that Mr. Harrel was mistaken, and that she had not yet declared for anybody. He hoped, therefore, that she would allow his son the honour of waiting upon her, and permit him to talk with Mr. Briggs, who, he understood, was her acting guardian, upon such matters as ought to be speedily adjusted.

Cecilia thanked him for the honour he intended her, and confirmed the truth of the account he had heard in St. James's-square, but at the same time told him she must decline receiving any visits from his lordship's son, and entreated him to take no measure towards the promotion of an affair which never could succeed.

He seemed much concerned at her answer, and endeavoured for some time to soften her, but found her so steady, though civil, in her refusal, that he was obliged, however unwillingly, to give up his attempt.

Cecilia, when he was gone, reflected with much vexation on the readiness of the Delviles to encourage his visit; she considered, however, that the intelligence he had heard might possibly be gathered in general conversation; but she blamed herself that she had not led to some enquiry

what part of the family he had seen, and who was present when the information was given him.

Meanwhile she found that neither coldness, distance, nor aversion were sufficient to repress Sir Robert Floyer, who continued to persecute her with as much confidence of success as could have arisen from the utmost encouragement. She again, though with much difficulty, contrived to speak with Mr. Harrel upon the subject, and openly accused him of spreading a report abroad, as well as countenancing an expectation at home, that had neither truth nor justice to support them.

Mr. Harrel, with his usual levity and carelessness, laughed at the charge, but denied any belief in her displeasure, and affected to think she was merely playing the coquette, while Sir Robert was not the less her decided choice.

Provoked and wearied, Cecilia resolved no longer to depend upon any body but herself for the management of her own affairs, and therefore, to conclude the business without any possibility of further cavilling, she wrote the following note to Sir Robert herself.

To Sir Robert Floyer, Bart.

Miss Beverley presents her compliments to Sir Robert Floyer, and as she has some reason to fear Mr. Harrel did not explicitly acquaint him with her answer to the commission with which he was entrusted, she thinks it necessary, in order to obviate any possible misunderstanding, to take this method of returning him thanks for the honour of his good opinion, but of begging at the same time that he would not lose a moment upon her account, as her thanks are all she can now, or ever, offer in return.

Portman-Square,
May 11th, 1779.

To this note Cecilia received no answer: but she had the pleasure to observe that Sir Robert forbore his usual visit on the day she sent it, and, though he appeared again the day following, he never spoke to her, and seemed sullen and out of humour.

Yet still young Delvile came not, and still, as her surprise encreased, her tranquillity was diminished. She could form no excuse for his delay, nor conjecture any reason for

his absence. Every motive seemed to favour his seeking, and not one his shunning her: the explanation which had so lately passed had informed him he had no rival to fear, and the manner in which he had heard it assured her the information was not indifferent to him; why, then, so assiduous in his visits when he thought her engaged, and so slack in all attendance when he knew she was at liberty?

CHAPTER VI.

A MURMURING.

UNABLE to relieve herself from this perplexity, Cecilia, to divert her chagrin, again visited Miss Belfield. She had then the pleasure to hear that her brother was much recovered, and had been able, the preceding day, to take an airing, which he had borne so well that Mr. Rupil had charged him to use the same exercise every morning.

"And will he?" said Cecilia.

"No, madam, I am sadly afraid not," she answered, "for coach-hire is very expensive, and we are willing, now, to save all we can in order to help fitting him out for going abroad."

Cecilia then earnestly entreated her to accept some assistance; but she assured her she did not dare without the consent of her mother, which, however, she undertook to obtain.

The next day, when Cecilia called to hear her success, Mrs. Belfield, who hitherto had kept out of sight, made her appearance. She found her, alike in person, manners and conversation, a coarse and ordinary woman, not more unlike her son in talents and acquired accomplishments than dissimilar to her daughter in softness and natural delicacy.

The moment Cecilia was seated, she began, without waiting for any ceremony, or requiring any solicitation, abruptly to talk of her affairs, and repiningly to relate her misfortunes.

"I find, madam," she said, "you have been so kind as to visit my daughter Henny a great many times, but as I have no time for company, I have always kept out of the way, having other things to do than sit still to talk. I

have had a sad time of it here, ma'am, with my poor son's illness, having no conveniences about me, and much ado to make him mind me; for he's all for having his own way, poor dear soul; and I'm sure I don't know who could contradict him, for it's what I never had the heart to do. But then, ma'am, what is to come of it? You see how bad things go! for though I have got a very good income, it won't do for every thing. And if it was as much again, I should want to save it all now. For here my poor son, you see, is reduced all in a minute, as one may say, from being one of the first gentlemen in the town, to a mere poor object, without a farthing in the world!"

"He is, however, I hope, now much better in his health?" said Cecilia.

"Yes, madam, thank heaven, for if he was worse, those might tell of it that would, for I'm sure I should never live to hear of it. He has been the best son in the world, madam, and used nothing but the best company, for I spared neither pains nor cost to bring him up genteelly, and I believe there's not a nobleman in the land that looks more the gentleman. However, there's come no good of it, for though his acquaintances was all among the first quality, he never received the value of a penny from the best of them. So I have no great need to be proud. But I meant for the best, though I have often enough wished I had not meddled in the matter, but left him to be brought up in the shop, as his father was before him."

"His present plan, however," said Cecilia, "will I hope make you ample amends both for your sufferings and your tenderness."

"What, madam, when he's going to leave me, and settle in foreign parts? If you was a mother yourself, madam, you would not think that such good amends."

"Settle?" said Cecilia, "No, he only goes for a year or two."

"That's more than I can say, madam, or any body else; and nobody knows what may happen in that time. And how I shall keep myself up when he's beyond seas, I am sure I don't know, for he has always been the pride of my life, and every penny I saved for him, I thought to have been paid in pounds."

"You will still have your daughter, and she seems so amiable, that I am sure you can want no consolation she will not endeavour to give you."

"But what is a daughter, madam, to such a son as mine? a son that I thought to have seen living like a prince, and sending his own coach for me to dine with him! And now he's going to be taken away from me, and nobody knows if I shall live till he comes back. But I may thank myself, for if I had but been content to see him brought up in the shop——yet all the world would have cried shame upon it, for when he was quite a child in arms, the people used all to say he was born to be a gentleman, and would live to make many a fine lady's heart ache."

"If he can but make *your* heart easy," said Cecilia, smiling, "we will not grieve that the fine ladies should escape the prophecy."

"O, ma'am, I don't mean by that to say he has been over gay among the ladies, for it's a thing I never heard of him; and I dare say if any lady was to take a fancy to him, she'd find there was not a modester young man in the world. But you must needs think what a hardship it is to me to have him turn out so unlucky, after all I have done for him, when I thought to have seen him at the top of the tree, as one may say!"

"He will yet, I hope," said Cecilia, "make you rejoice in all your kindness to him: his health is already returning, and his affairs wear again a more prosperous aspect."

"But do you suppose, ma'am, that having him sent two or three hundred miles away from me, with some young master to take care of, is the way to make up to me what I have gone through for him? why I used to deny myself everything in the world, in order to save money to buy him smart clothes, and let him go to the Opera, and Ranelagh, and such sort of places, that he might keep himself in fortune's way! and now you see the end of it! here he is, in a little shabby room up two pair of stairs, with not one of the great folks coming near him, to see if he's so much as dead or alive,"

"I do not wonder," said Cecilia, "that you resent their showing so little gratitude for the pleasure and entertainment they have formerly received from him: but comfort

yourself that it will at least secure you from any similar disappointment, as Mr. Belfield will, in future, be guarded from forming such precarious expectations."

"But what good will that do me, ma'am, for all the money he has been throwing after them all this while? do you think I would have scraped it up for him, and gone without everything in the world, to see it all end in this manner? why he might as well have been brought up the commonest journeyman, for any comfort I shall have of him at this rate. And suppose he should be drowned in going beyond seas, what am I to do then?"

"You must not," said Cecilia, "indulge such fears; I doubt not but your son will return well, and return all that you wish."

"Nobody knows that, ma'am; and the only way to be certain is for him not to go at all; and I'm surprised, ma'am, you can wish him to make such a journey to nobody knows where, with nothing but a young master that he must as good as teach his A. B. C. all the way they go!"

"Certainly," said Cecilia, amazed at this accusation, "I should not wish him to go abroad, if any thing more eligible could be done by his remaining in England: but as no prospect of that sort seems before him, you must endeavour to reconcile yourself to parting with him."

"Yes, but how am I to do that, when I don't know if ever I shall see him again? Who could have thought of his living so among the great folks, and then coming to want! I'm sure I thought they'd have provided for him like a son of their own, for he used to go about to all the public places just as they did themselves. Day after day I used to be counting for when he would come to tell me he'd got a place at court, or something of that sort, for I never could tell what it would be: and then the next news I heard, was that he was shut up in this poor bit of a place, with nobody troubling their heads about him! however, I'll never be persuaded but he might have done better, if he would but have spoke a good word for himself, or else have let me done it for him: instead of which, he never would so much as let me see any of his grand friends, though I would not have made the least scruple in the world to have asked them for anything he had a mind to."

Cecilia again endeavoured to give her comfort; but finding her only satisfaction was to express her discontent, she arose to take leave. But, turning first to Miss Belfield, contrived to make a private enquiry whether she might repeat her offer of assistance. A downcast and dejected look answering in the affirmative, she put into her hand a ten pound bank note, and wishing them good morning, hurried out of the room.

Miss Belfield was running after her, but was stopt by her mother who called out, "What is it?—How much is it?——Let me look at it!"—and then, following Cecilia herself, she thanked her aloud all the way down stairs for her *genteelness*, assuring her she would not fail making it known to her son.[1]

Cecilia at this declaration turned back, and exhorted her by no means to mention it; after which she got into her chair, and returned home; pitying Miss Belfield for the unjust partiality shown to her brother, and excusing the proud shame he had manifested of his relations, from the vulgarity and selfishness of her who was at the head of them.

Almost a fortnight had now elapsed since her explanation with young Delvile, yet not once had he been in Portman-square, though in the fortnight which had preceded, scarce a day had passed which had not afforded him some pretence for calling there.

At length a note arrived from Mrs. Delvile. It contained the most flattering reproaches for her long absence, and a pressing invitation that she would dine and spend the next day with her.

Cecilia, who had merely denied herself the pleasure of this visit from an apprehension of seeming too desirous of keeping up the connexion, now, from the same sense of propriety, determined upon making it, wishing equally to avoid all appearance of consciousness, either by seeking or avoiding the intimacy of the family.

Not a little was her anxiety to know in what manner young Delvile would receive her, whether he would be

[1] "Mrs. Belfield has quite enchanted Mrs. Thrale,—she knows, she says, so many like her in the Borough."—*Miss Burney to Mr. Crisp*, May, 1782.

grave or gay, agitated, as during their last conversation, or easy, as in the meetings which had preceded it.

She found Mrs. Delvile, however, alone; and extremely kind to her, yet much surprised, and half displeased, that she had so long been absent. Cecilia, though somewhat distressed what excuses to offer, was happy to find herself so highly in favour, and not very reluctant to promise more frequent visits in future.

They were then summoned to dinner; but still no young Delvile was visible: they were joined only by his father, and she found that no one else was expected.

Her astonishment now was greater than ever, and she could account by no possible conjecture for a conduct so extraordinary. Hitherto, whenever she had visited in St. James's-square by appointment, the air with which he had received her, constantly announced that he had impatiently waited her arrival; he had given up other engagements to stay with her, he had openly expressed his hopes that she would never be long absent, and seemed to take a pleasure in her society to which every other was inferior. And now, how striking the difference! he forbore all visits at the house where she resided, he even flew from his own when he knew she was approaching it!

Nor was this the only vexation of which this day was productive; Mr. Delvile, when the servants were withdrawn after dinner, expressed some concern that he had been called from her during their last conversation, and added that he would take the present opportunity to talk with her upon some matters of importance.

He then began the usual parading prelude, which, upon all occasions, he thought necessary, in order to enhance the value of his interposition, remind her of her inferiority, and impress her with a deeper sense of the honour which his guardianship conferred upon her: after which he proceeded to make a formal enquiry, whether she had positively dismissed Sir Robert Floyer?

She assured him she had.

"I understood my Lord Ernolf," said he, "that you had totally discouraged the addresses of his son?"

"Yes, sir," answered Cecilia, "for I never mean to receive them."

"Have you, then, any other engagement?"

"No, sir," cried she, colouring between shame and displeasure, "none at all."

"This is a very extraordinary circumstance!" replied he: "the son of an earl to be rejected by a young woman of no family, and yet no reason assigned for it!"

This contemptuous speech so cruelly shocked Cecilia, that though he continued to harangue her for a great part of the afternoon, she only answered him when compelled by some question, and was so evidently discomposed, that Mrs. Delvile, who perceived her uneasiness with much concern, redoubled her civilities and caresses, and used every method in her power to oblige and enliven her.

Cecilia was not ungrateful for her care, and showed her sense of it by added respect and attention; but her mind was disturbed, and she quitted the house as soon as she was able.

Mr. Delvile's speech, from her previous knowledge of the extreme haughtiness of his character, would not have occasioned her the smallest emotion, had it merely related to him or to herself: but as it concerned Lord Ernolf, she regarded it as also concerning his son; and she found that, far from trying to promote the union Mr. Monckton had told her he had planned, he did not seem even to think of it, but, on the contrary, proposed and seconded with all his interest another alliance.

This, added to the behaviour of young Delvile, made her suspect that some engagement was in agitation on his own part, and that while she thought him so sedulous only to avoid her, he was simply occupied in seeking another. This painful suggestion, which every thing seemed to confirm, again overset all her schemes, and destroyed all her visionary happiness. Yet how to reconcile it with what had passed at their last meeting she knew not; she had then every reason to believe that his heart was in her power, and that courage, or an opportunity more seasonable, was all he wanted to make known his devotion to her; why, then, shun if he loved her? why, if he loved her not, seem so perturbed at the explanation of her independence?

A very little time, however, she hoped would unravel this mystery; in two days, the entertainment which Mr. Harrel had planned, to deceive the world by an appear-

ance of affluence to which he had lost all title, was to take place; young Delvile, in common with every other person who had ever been seen at the house, had early received an invitation, which he had readily promised to accept some time before the conversation that seemed the period of their acquaintance had passed. Should he, after being so long engaged, fail to keep his appointment, she could no longer have any doubt of the justice of her conjecture; should he, on the contrary, again appear, from his behaviour and his looks she might perhaps be able to gather why he had so long been absent.

CHAPTER VII.

A ROUT.

THE day at length arrived of which the evening and the entrance of company were, for the first time, as eagerly wished by Cecilia as by her dissipated host and hostess. No expense and no pains had been spared to render this long projected entertainment splendid and elegant; it was to begin with a concert, which was to be followed by a ball, and succeeded by a supper.

Cecilia, though unusually anxious about her own affairs, was not so engrossed by them as to behold with indifference a scene of such unjustifiable extravagance; it contributed to render her thoughtful and uneasy, and to deprive her of all mental power of participating in the gaiety of the assembly. Mr. Arnott was yet more deeply affected by the mad folly of the scheme, and received from the whole evening no other satisfaction than that which a look of sympathetic concern from Cecilia occasionally afforded him.

Till nine o'clock no company appeared, except Sir Robert Floyer, who stayed from dinner time, and Mr. Morrice, who having received an invitation for the evening, was so much delighted with the permission to again enter the house, that he made use of it between six and seven o'clock, and before the family had left the dining parlour. He apologized with the utmost humility to Cecilia for the

unfortunate accident at the Pantheon; but as to her it had been productive of nothing but pleasure, by exciting in young Delvile the most flattering alarm for her safety, she found no great difficulty in according him her pardon.

Among those who came in the first crowd was Mr. Monckton, who, had he been equally unconscious of sinister views, would, in following his own inclination, have been as early in his attendance as Mr. Morrice; but who, to obviate all suspicious remarks, conformed to the fashionable tardiness of the times.

Cecilia's chief apprehension for the evening was that Sir Robert Floyer would ask her to dance with him, which she could not refuse without sitting still during the ball, nor accept, after the reports she knew to be spread, without seeming to give a public sanction to them. To Mr. Monckton therefore, innocently considering him as a married man and her old friend, she frankly told her distress, adding, by way of excuse for the hint, that the partners were to be changed every two dances.

Mr. Monckton, though his principal study was carefully to avoid all public gallantry or assiduity towards Cecilia, had not the forbearance to resist this intimation, and therefore she had the pleasure of telling Sir Robert, when he asked the honour of her hand for the two first dances, that she was already engaged.

She then expected that he would immediately secure her for the two following; but, to her great joy, he was so much piqued by the evident pleasure with which she announced her engagement, that he proudly walked away without adding another word.

Much satisfied with this arrangement, and not without hopes that, if she was at liberty when he arrived, she might be applied to by young Delvile, she now endeavoured to procure herself a place in the music room.

This, with some difficulty, she effected; but though there was an excellent concert, in which several capital performers played and sung, she found it impossible to hear a note, as she chanced to be seated just by Miss Leeson, and two other young ladies, who were paying one another compliments upon their dress and their looks, settling to dance in the same cotillon, guessing who would begin the minuets,

and wondering there were not more gentlemen. Yet, in the midst of this unmeaning conversation, of which she remarked that Miss Leeson bore the principal part, not one of them failed, from time to time, to exclaim with great rapture "*What sweet music!*—" "*Oh how charming!*" "*Did you ever hear any thing so delightful?*—"

"Ah," said Cecilia to Mr. Gosport, who now approached her, "but for your explanatory observations, how much would the sudden loquacity of this *supercilious* lady, whom I had imagined all but dumb, have perplext me!"

"Those who are most silent to strangers," answered Mr. Gosport, "commonly talk most fluently to their intimates, for they are deeply in arrears, and eager to pay off their debts. Miss Leeson now is in her proper set, and therefore appears in her natural character: and the poor girl's joy in being able to utter all the nothings she has painfully hoarded while separated from her coterie, gives to her now the wild transport of a bird just let loose from a cage. I rejoice to see the little creature at liberty, for what can be so melancholy as a forced appearance of thinking, where there are no materials for such an occupation?"

Soon after, Miss Larolles, who was laughing immoderately, contrived to crowd herself into their party, calling out to them, "O, you have had the greatest loss in the world! if you had but been in the next room just now!—there's the drollest figure there you can conceive: enough to frighten one to look at him." And presently she added "O Lord, if you stoop a little this way, you may see him!"

Then followed a general tittering, accompanied with exclamations of "Lord, what a fright!" "It's enough to kill one with laughing to look at him!" "Did you ever see such a horrid creature in your life?" And soon after, one of them screamed out "O Lord, see!—he's grinning at Miss Beverley!"

Cecilia then turned her head towards the door, and there, to her own as well as her neighbours amazement, she perceived Mr. Briggs! who, in order to look about him at his ease, was standing upon a chair, from which, having singled her out, he was regarding her with a facetious smirk, which, when it caught her eye, was converted into a familiar nod.

She returned his salutation, but was not much charmed to observe, that presently descending from his exalted post, which had moved the wonder and risibility of all the company, he made a motion to approach her; for which purpose, regardless of either ladies or gentlemen in his way, he sturdily pushed forward, with the same unconcerned hardiness he would have forced himself through a crowd in the street; and taking not the smallest notice of their frowns, supplications that he would stand still, and exclamations of "Pray, sir!"—"Lord, how troublesome!" and "Sir, I do assure you here's no room!" he fairly and adroitly elbowed them from him till he reached her seat: and then, with a waggish grin, he looked round, to show he had got the better, and to see whom he had discomposed.

When he had enjoyed this triumph, he turned to Cecilia, and chucking her under the chin, said "Well, my little duck, how goes it? got to you at last; squeezed my way; would not be nicked; warrant I'll mob with the best of them! Look here! all in a heat!—hot as the dog-days."

And then, to the utter consternation of the company, he took off his wig to wipe his head!—which occasioned such universal horror, that all who were near the door escaped into other apartments, while those who were too much enclosed for flight, with one accord turned away their heads.

Captain Aresby, being applied to by some of the ladies to remonstrate upon this unexampled behaviour, advanced to him, and said, "I am quite *abîmé*, sir, to incommode you, but the commands of the ladies are insuperable. Give me leave, sir, to entreat that you would put on your wig."

"My wig?" cried he, "ay, ay, shall in a moment, only want to wipe my head first."

"I am quite *assommé*, sir," returned the Captain, "to disturb you, but I must really hint you don't comprehend me: the ladies are extremely inconvenienced by these sort of sights, and we make it a principle they should never be *accablées* with them."

"Anan!" cried Mr. Briggs, staring.

"I say, sir," replied the Captain, "the ladies are quite *au désespoir* that you will not cover your head."

"What for?" cried he, "what's the matter with my head? ne'er a man here got a better! very good stuff in it: won't change it with ne'er a one of you!"

And then, half unconscious of the offence he had given, and half angry at the rebuke he had received, he leisurely compleated his design, and again put on his wig, settling it to his face with as much composure as if he had performed the operation in his own dressing-room.

The Captain, having gained his point, walked away, making, however, various grimaces of disgust, and whispering from side to side "he's the most petrifying fellow I ever was *obsédé* by!"

Mr. Briggs then, with much derision, and sundry distortions of countenance, listened to an Italian song: after which, he bustled back to the outer apartment, in search of Cecilia, who, ashamed of seeming a party in the disturbance he had excited, had taken the opportunity of his dispute with the Captain to run into the next room; where, however, he presently found her, while she was giving an account to Mr. Gosport of her connexion with him, to which Morrice, ever curious and eager to know what was going forward, was also listening.

"Ah, little chick!" cried he, "got to you again! soon out-jostle those jemmy sparks! But where's the supper? see nothing of the supper! Time to go to bed,—suppose there is none; all a take-in; nothing but a little piping."

"Supper, sir?" cried Cecilia; "the Concert is not over yet. Was supper mentioned in your card of invitation?"

"Ay, to be sure, should not have come else. Don't visit often; always costs money. Wish I had not come now; wore a hole in my shoe; hardly a crack in it before."

"Why you did not walk, sir?"

"Did, did; why not? Might as well have stayed away though; daubed my best coat, like to have spoilt it."

"So much the better for the tailors, sir," said Morrice, pertly, "for then you must have another."

"Another! what for? ha'n't had this seven years; just as good as new."

"I hope," said Cecilia, "you had not another fall?"

"Worse, worse; like to have lost my bundle."

"What bundle, sir?"

"Best coat and waistcoat; brought 'em in my handkerchief, purpose to save them. When will Master Harrel do as much?"

"But had you no apprehensions, sir," said Mr. Gosport, drily, "that the handkerchief would be the sooner worn out for having a knot tied in it?"

"Took care of that, tied it slack. Met an unlucky boy: little dog gave it a pluck; knot slipt; coat and waistcoat popt out."

"But what became of the boy, sir?" cried Morrice, "I hope he got off?"

"Could not run for laughing; caught him in a minute; gave him something to laugh for; drubbed him soundly."

"O, poor fellow!" cried Morrice, with a loud hollow, "I am really sorry for him. But pray, Sir, what became of your best coat and waistcoat while you gave him this drubbing? did you leave them in the dirt?"

"No, Mr. Nincompoop," answered Briggs angrily, "I put them on a stall."

"That was a perilous expedient, sir," said Mr. Gosport, "and I should fear might be attended with ill consequences, for the owner of the stall would be apt to expect some little *douceur*. How did you manage, sir?"

"Bought a halfpennyworth of apples. Serve for supper to-morrow night."

"But how, sir, did you get your clothes dried, or cleaned?"

"Went to an alehouse; cost me half a pint."

"And pray, sir," cried Morrice, "where, at last, did you make your toilette?"

"Sha'n't tell, sha'n't tell; ask no more questions. What signifies where a man slips on a coat and waistcoat?"

"Why, sir, this will prove an expensive expedition to you," said Mr. Gosport, very gravely: "Have you cast up what it may cost you?"

"More than it's worth, more than it's worth," answered he pettishly; "ha'n't laid out so much in pleasure these five years."

"Ha! ha!" cried Morrice, hallowing aloud, "why it can't be more than sixpence in all!"

"Sixpence?" repeated he scornfully, "if you don't

know the value of sixpence, you'll never be worth fivepence three farthings. How do think got rich, hay?—by wearing fine coats, and frizzling my pate? No, no; Master Harrel for that! ask him if he'll cast an account with me!—never knew a man worth a penny with such a coat as that on."

Morrice again laughed, and again Mr. Briggs reproved him; and Cecilia, taking advantage of the squabble, stole back to the music-room.

Here, in a few minutes, Mrs. Panton, a lady who frequently visited at the house, approached Cecilia, followed by a gentleman, whom she had never before seen, but who was so evidently charmed with her, that he had looked at no other object since his entrance into the house.

Mrs. Panton, presenting him to her by the name of Mr. Marriot, told her he had begged her intercession for the honour of her hand in the first two dances: and the moment she answered that she was already engaged, the same request was made for the two following, Cecilia had then no excuse, and was therefore obliged to accept him.

The hope she had entertained in the early part of the evening, was already almost wholly extinguished! Delvile appeared not! though her eye watched the entrance of every new visitor, and her vexation made her believe that he alone, of all the town, was absent.

When the Concert was over, the company joined promiscuously for chat and refreshments before the ball; and Mr. Gosport advanced to Cecilia, to relate a ridiculous dispute which had just passed between Mr. Briggs and Morrice.

"You, Mr. Gosport," said Cecilia, "who seem to make the *minutiæ* of absurd characters your study, can explain to me, perhaps, why Mr. Briggs seems to have as much pleasure in proclaiming his meanness, as in boasting his wealth."

"Because," answered Mr. Gosport, "he knows them, in his own affairs, to be so nearly allied, that but for practising the one, he had never possessed the other; ignorant, therefore, of all discrimination,—except, indeed, of pounds, shillings and pence!—he supposes them necessarily inseparable, because with him they were united. What you,

however, call meanness, he thinks wisdom, and recollects, therefore, not with shame but with triumph, the various little arts and subterfuges by which his coffers have been filled."

Here Lord Ernolf, concluding Cecilia still disengaged from seeing her only discourse with Mr. Gosport and Mr. Monckton, one of whom was old enough to be her father, and the other was a *married man*, advanced, and presenting to her Lord Derford, his son, a youth not yet of age, solicited for him the honour of her hand as his partner.

Cecilia, having a double excuse, easily declined this proposal; Lord Ernolf, however, was too earnest to be repulsed, and told her he should again try his interest when her two present engagements were fulfilled. Hopeless, now, of young Delvile, she heard this intimation with indifference; and was accompanying Mr. Monckton into the ball-room, when Miss Larolles, flying towards her with an air of infinite eagerness, caught her hand, and said in a whisper "pray let me wish you joy!"

"Certainly!" said Cecilia, "but pray let me ask you of what?"

"O Lord, now," answered she, "I am sure you know what I mean; but you must know I have a prodigious monstrous great favour to beg of you: now pray don't refuse me; I assure you if you do, I shall be so mortified you've no notion."

"Well, what is it?"

"Nothing but to let me be one of your bride maids. I assure you I shall take it as the greatest favour in the world."

"My bride maid!" cried Cecilia; "but do you not think the bridegroom himself will be rather offended to find a bride maid appointed, before he is even thought of?"

"O pray, now," cried she, "don't be ill-natured, for if you are, you've no idea how I shall be disappointed. Only conceive what happened to me three weeks ago! you must know I was invited to Miss Clinton's wedding, and so I made up a new dress on purpose, in a very particular sort of shape, quite of my own invention, and it had the sweetest effect you can conceive; well, and when the time came, do you know her mother happened to die! Never any

thing was so excessive unlucky, for now she won't be married this half year, and my dress will be quite old and yellow; for it's all white, and the most beautiful thing you ever saw in your life."

"Upon my word you are very obliging!" cried Cecilia, laughing; "and pray do you make interest regularly round with all your female acquaintance to be married upon this occasion, or am I the only one you think this distress will work upon?"

"Now, how excessive teasing!" cried Miss Larolles, "when you know so well what I mean, and when all the town knows as well as myself."

Cecilia then seriously enquired whether she had really any meaning at all.

"Lord yes," answered she, "you know I mean about Sir Robert Floyer: for I'm told you've quite refused Lord Derford."

"And are you also told that I have accepted Sir Robert Floyer?"

"O dear yes!—the jewels are bought, and the equipages are built; it's quite a settled thing, I know very well."

Cecilia then very gravely began an attempt to undeceive her; but the dancing beginning also at the same time, she stayed not to hear her, hurrying, with a beating heart, to the place of action. Mr. Monckton and his fair partner then followed, mutually exclaiming against Mr. Harrel's impenetrable conduct; of which Cecilia, however, in a short time ceased wholly to think, for as soon as the first cotillon was over, she perceived young Delvile just walking into the room.

Surprise, pleasure and confusion assailed her all at once; she had entirely given up her expectation of seeing him, and an absence so determined had led her to conclude he had pursuits which ought to make her join in wishing it lengthened; but now he appeared, that conclusion, with the fears that gave rise to it, vanished; and she regretted nothing but the unfortunate succession of engagements which would prevent her dancing with him at all, and probably keep off all conversation with him till supper time.

She soon, however, perceived a change in his air and behaviour that extremely astonished her: he looked grave

and thoughtful, saluted her at a distance, showed no sign of any intention to approach her, regarded the dancing and dancers as a public spectacle in which he had no chance of personal interest, and seemed wholly altered, not merely with respect to her, but to himself, as his former eagerness for her society was not more abated than his former general gaiety.

She had no time, however, for comments, as she was presently called to the second cotillon; but the confused and unpleasant ideas which, without waiting for time or reflection, crowded upon her imagination on observing his behaviour, were not more depressing to herself, than obvious to her partner; Mr. Monckton by the change in her countenance first perceived the entrance of young Delvile, and by her apparent emotion and uneasiness, readily penetrated into the state of her mind; he was confirmed that her affections were engaged; he saw, too, that she was doubtful with what return.

The grief with which he made the first discovery, was somewhat lessened by the hopes he conceived from the second; yet the evening was to him as painful as to Cecilia, since he now knew that whatever prosperity might ultimately attend his address and assiduity, her heart was not her own to bestow; and that even were he sure of young Delvile's indifference, and actually at liberty to make proposals for himself, the time of being first in her esteem was at an end, and the long-earned good opinion which he had hoped would have ripened into affection, might now be wholly undermined by the sudden impression of a lively stranger, without trouble to himself, and perhaps without pleasure!

Reflections such as these wholly embittered the delight he had promised himself from dancing with her, and took from him all power to combat the anxiety with which she was seized: when the second cotillon, therefore, was over, instead of following her to a seat, or taking the privilege of his present situation to converse with her, the jealousy rising in his breast robbed him of all satisfaction, and gave to him no other desire than to judge its justice by watching her motions at a distance.

Meanwhile Cecilia, inattentive whether he accompanied or quitted her, proceeded to the first vacant seat. Young

Delvile was standing near it, and, in a short time, but rather as if he could not avoid than as if he wished it, he came to enquire how she did.

The simplest question, in the then situation of her mind, was sufficient to confuse her, and though she answered, she hardly knew what he had asked. A minute's recollection, however, restored an apparent composure, and she talked to him of Mrs. Delvile, with her usual partial regard for that lady, and with an earnest endeavour to seem unconscious of any alteration in his behaviour.

Yet, to him, even this trifling and general conversation was evidently painful, and he looked relieved by the approach of Sir Robert Floyer, who soon after joined them.

At this time a young lady who was sitting by Cecilia, called to a servant who was passing, for a glass of lemonade: Cecilia desired he would bring her one also; but Delvile, not sorry to break off the discourse, said he would himself be her cup-bearer, and for that purpose went away.

A moment after, the servant returned with some lemonade to Cecilia's neighbour, and Sir Robert, taking a glass from him, brought it to Cecilia at the very instant young Delvile came with another.

"I think I am before-hand with you, sir," said the insolent baronet.

"No, sir," answered young Delvile, "I think we were both in together: Miss Beverley, however, is steward of the race, and we must submit to her decision."

"Well, madam," cried Sir Robert, "here we stand, waiting your pleasure. Which is to be the happy man!"

"Each, I hope," answered Cecilia, with admirable presence of mind, "since I expect no less than that you will both do me the honour of drinking my health."

This little contrivance, which saved her alike from showing favour or giving offence, could not but be applauded by both parties: and while they obeyed her orders, she took a third glass herself from the servant.

While this was passing, Mr. Briggs, again perceiving her, stumpt hastily towards her, calling out "Ah, ah! my duck! what's that? got something nice? Come here, my lad, taste it myself."

He then took a glass, but having only put it to his

mouth, made a wry face, and returned it, saying "Bad! bad! poor punch indeed!—not a drop of rum in it!"

"So much the better, sir," cried Morrice, who diverted himself by following him, "for then you see the master of the house spares in something, and you said he spared in nothing."

"Don't spare in fools!" returned Mr. Briggs, "keeps them in plenty."

"No, sir, nor in any out of the way characters," answered Morrice.

"So much the worse," cried Briggs, "so much the worse! Eat him out of house and home; won't leave him a rag to his back, nor a penny in his pocket. Never mind 'em, my little duck; mind none of your guardians but me: t'other two a'n't worth a rush."

Cecilia, somewhat ashamed of this speech, looked towards young Delvile, in whom it occasioned the first smile she had seen that evening.

"Been looking about for you!" continued Briggs, nodding sagaciously; "believe I've found one will do. Guess what I mean;—£100,000—hay?—what say to that? any thing better at the west end of the town?"

"£100,000," cried Morrice, "and pray, sir, who may this be?"

"Not you, Mr. Jackanapes! sure of that. A'n't quite positive he'll have you, neither. Think he will, though."

"Pray, sir, what age is he?" cried the never daunted Morrice.

"Why about—let's see—don't know, never heard,—what signifies?"

"But, sir, he's an old man, I suppose, by being so rich?"

"Old? no, no such thing; about my own standing."

"What, sir, and do you propose him for a husband to Miss Beverley?"

"Why not? know ever a one warmer? think Master Harrel will get her a better; or t'other old Don, in the grand square?"

"If you please, sir," cried Cecilia hastily, "we will talk of this matter another time."

"No, pray," cried young Delvile, who could not forbear laughing, "let it be discussed now."

"Hate 'em," continued Mr. Briggs, "hate 'em both! one spending more than he's worth, cheated and overreached by fools, running into gaol to please a parcel of knaves: t'other counting nothing but uncles and grandfathers, dealing out fine names instead of cash, casting up more cousins than guineas—"

Again Cecilia endeavoured to silence him, but, only chucking her under the chin, he went on, "Ay, ay, my little duck, never mind 'em; one of them i'n't worth a penny, and t'other has nothing in his pockets but lists of the defunct. What good will come of that? would not give twopence a dozen for 'em! A poor set of grandees, with nothing but a tie-wig for their portions!"

Cecilia, unable to bear this harangue in the presence of young Delvile, who, however, laughed it off with a very good grace, arose with an intention to retreat, which being perceived by Sir Robert Floyer, who had attended to this dialogue with haughty contempt, he came forward, and said "now then, madam, may I have the honour of your hand?"

"No, sir," answered Cecilia, "I am engaged."

"Engaged again?" cried he, with the air of a man who thought himself much injured.

"Glad of it, glad of it!" said Mr. Briggs; "served very right! have nothing to say to him, my chick!"

"Why not, sir?" cried Sir Robert, with an imperious look.

"Sha'n't have her, sha'n't have her! can tell you that; won't consent; know you of old."

"And what do you know of me, pray sir?"

"No good, no good; nothing to say to you; found fault with my nose! ha'n't forgot it."

At this moment Mr. Marriot came to claim his partner, who, very willing to quit this scene of wrangling and vulgarity, immediately attended him.

Miss Larolles, again flying up to her, said "O, my dear, we are all expiring to know who that creature is! I never saw such a horrid fright in my life!"

Cecilia was beginning to satisfy her, but some more young ladies coming up to join in the request, she endeavoured to pass on: "O, but," cried Miss Larolles, detaining

her, "do pray stop, for I've something to tell you that's so monstrous you've no idea. Do you know Mr. Meadows has not danced at all! and he's been standing with Mr. Sawyer, and looking on all the time, and whispering and laughing so you've no notion. However, I assure you, I'm excessive glad he did not ask me, for all I have been sitting still all this time, for I had a great deal rather sit still, I assure you: only I'm sorry I put on this dress, for any thing would have done just to look on in that stupid manner."

Here Mr. Meadows sauntered towards them; and all the young ladies began playing with their fans, and turning their heads another way, to disguise the expectations which his approach awakened; and Miss Larolles, in a hasty whisper to Cecilia, cried, "Pray don't take any notice of what I said, for if he should happen to ask me, I can't well refuse him, you know, for if I do, he'll be so excessive affronted you can't think."

Mr. Meadows then, mixing in the little group, began, with sundry grimaces, to exclaim, "How intolerably hot it is! there's no such thing as breathing. How can any body think of dancing! I am amazed Mr. Harrel has not a ventilator in this room. Don't you think it would be a great improvement?"

This speech, though particularly addressed to no one, received immediately an assenting answer from all the young ladies.

Then, turning to Miss Larolles, "Don't you dance?" he said.

"Me?" cried she, embarrassed, "yes, I believe so,—really, I don't know,—I a'n't quite determined."

"O, do dance!" cried he, stretching himself and yawning, "it always gives me spirits to see you."

Then, turning suddenly to Cecilia, without any previous ceremony of renewing his acquaintance, either by speaking or bowing, he abruptly said "Do you love dancing, ma'am?"

"Yes, sir, extremely well."

"I am very glad to hear it. You have one thing, then, to soften existence."

"Do you dislike it yourself?"

"What, dancing? Oh, dreadful! how it was ever adopted

in a civilized country, I cannot find out; 'tis certainly a Barbarian exercise, and of savage origin. Don't you think so, Miss Larolles?"

"Lord no," cried Miss Larolles, "I assure you I like it better than any thing; I know nothing so delightful; I declare I dare say I could not live without it; I should be so stupid you can't conceive."

"Why I remember," said Mr. Marriott, "when Mr. Meadows was always dancing himself. Have you forgot, sir, when you used to wish the night would last for ever, that you might dance without ceasing?"

Mr. Meadows, who was now intently surveying a painting that was over the chimney-piece, seemed not to hear this question, but presently called out, "I am amazed Mr. Harrel can suffer such a picture as this to be in his house. I hate a portrait, 'tis so wearisome looking at a thing that is doing nothing!"

"Do you like historical pictures, sir, any better?"

"O, no, I detest them! views of battles, murders, and death! Shocking! shocking!—I shrink from them with horror!"

"Perhaps you are fond of landscapes?"

"By no means! Green trees and fat cows! what do they tell one? I hate every thing that is insipid."

"Your toleration, then," said Cecilia, "will not be very extensive."

"No," said he, yawning, "one can tolerate nothing! one's patience is wholly exhausted by the total tediousness of everything one sees, and everybody one talks with. Don't you find it so, ma'am?"

"*Sometimes!*" said Cecilia, rather archly.

"You are right, ma'am, extremely right; one does not know what in the world to do with one's self. At home, one is killed with meditation; abroad, one is overpowered by ceremony; no possibility of finding ease or comfort. You never go into public, I think, ma'am?"

"Why not to be much *marked*, I find!" said Cecilia, laughing.

"O, I beg your pardon! I believe I saw you one evening at Almack's: I really beg your pardon, but I had quite forgot it."

"Lord, Mr. Meadows," said Miss Larolles, "don't you know you are meaning the Pantheon? only conceive how you forget things!"

"The Pantheon, was it? I never know one of those places from another. I heartily wish they were all abolished; I hate public places. 'Tis terrible to be under the same roof with a set of people who would care nothing if they saw one expiring!"

"You are, at least, then, fond of the society of your friends?"

"O, no! to be worn out by seeing always the same faces!—one is sick to death of friends; nothing makes one so melancholy."

Cecilia now went to join the dancers, and Mr. Meadows, turning to Miss Larolles, said "Pray don't let me keep you from dancing; I am afraid you'll lose your place."

"No," cried she, bridling, "I sha'nt dance at all."

"How cruel!" cried he, yawning, "when you know how it exhilarates me to see you! Don't you think this room is very close? I must go and try another atmosphere——But I hope you will relent, and dance."

And then, stretching his arms as if half asleep, he sauntered into the next room, where he flung himself upon a sofa till the ball was over.[1]

The new partner of Cecilia, who was a wealthy, but very simple young man, used his utmost efforts to entertain and oblige her, and, flattered by the warmth of his own desire, he fancied that he succeeded; though, in a state of such suspense and anxiety, a man of brighter talents had failed.

At the end of the two dances, Lord Ernolf again attempted to engage her for his son, but she now excused herself from dancing any more, and sat quietly as a spectatress till the rest of the company gave over. Mr. Marriott, however, would not quit her, and she was compelled to support with him a trifling conversation, which, though irksome to herself, to him, who had not *seen her in her happier hour*, was delightful.

[1] "The room was very thin, and almost half the ladies danced with one another, though there were men enough present, I believe, had they chosen such exertion; but the Meadowses at balls are in crowds."—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay.* Brighthelmstone, Nov. 2, 1782.

She expected every instant to be again joined by young Delvile, but the expectation was disappointed; he came not; she concluded he was in another apartment; the company was summoned to supper, she then thought it impossible to miss him; but, after waiting and looking for him in vain, she found he had already left the house.

The rest of the evening she scarce knew what passed, for she attended to nothing; Mr. Monckton might watch, and Mr. Briggs might exhort her, Sir Robert might display his insolence, or Mr. Marriott his gallantry,—all was equally indifferent, and equally unheeded, and before half the company left the house, she retired to her own room.

She spent the night in the utmost disturbance; the occurrences of the evening with respect to young Delvile she looked upon as decisive: if his absence had chagrined her, his presence had still more shocked her, since, while she was left to conjecture, though she had fears she had hopes, and though all she saw was gloomy, all she expected was pleasant; but they had now met, and those expectations proved fallacious. She knew not, indeed, how to account for the strangeness of his conduct; but in seeing it was strange, she was convinced it was unfavourable: he had evidently avoided her while it was in his power, and when, at last, he was obliged to meet her, he was formal, distant, and reserved.

The more she recollected and dwelt upon the difference of his behaviour in their preceding meeting, the more angry as well as amazed she became at the change, and though she still concluded the pursuit of some other object occasioned it, she could find no excuse for his fickleness if that pursuit was recent, nor for his caprice if it was anterior.

CHAPTER VIII

A BROAD HINT.

THE next day Cecilia, to drive Delvile a little from her thoughts, which she now no longer wished him to occupy, again made a visit to Miss Belfield, whose society afforded her more consolation than any other she could procure.

She found her employed in packing up, and preparing to remove to another lodging, for her brother, she said, was so much better, that he did not think it right to continue in so disgraceful a situation.

She talked with her accustomed openness of her affairs, and the interest which Cecilia involuntarily took in them contributed to lessen her vexation in thinking of her own. "The generous friend of my brother," said she, "who, though but a new acquaintance to him, has courted him in all his sorrows, when every body else forsook him, has brought him at last into a better way of thinking. He says there is a gentleman whose son is soon going abroad, who he is almost sure will like my brother vastly, and in another week, he is to be introduced to him. And so, if my mother can but reconcile herself to parting with him, perhaps we may all do well again."

"Your mother," said Cecilia, "when he is gone, will better know the value of the blessing she has left in her daughter."

"O no, madam, no; she is wrapt up in him, and cares nothing for all the world besides. It was always so, and we have all of us been used to it. But we have had a sad scene since you were so kind as to come last; for when she told him what you had done, he was almost out of his senses with anger that we had acquainted you with his distress, and said it was publishing his misery, and undoing whatever his friend or himself could do, for it was making him ashamed to appear in the world, even when his affairs might be better. But I told him again

and again that you had as much sweetness as goodness, and instead of hurting his reputation, would do him nothing but credit."

"I am sorry," said Cecilia, "Mrs. Belfield mentioned the circumstance at all; it would have been better, for many reasons, that he should not have heard of it."

"She hoped it would please him," answered Miss Belfield; "however, he made us both promise we would take no such step in future, for he said *we* were not reduced to so much indigence, whatever he was: and that as to our accepting money from other people, that we might save up our own for him, it would be answering no purpose, for he should think himself a monster to make use of it."

"And what said your mother?"

"Why she gave him a great many promises that she would never vex him about it again; and indeed, much as I know we are obliged to you, madam, and gratefully as I am sure I would lay down my life to serve you, I am very glad in this case that my brother has found it out. For though I so much wish him to do something for himself, and not to be so proud, and live in a manner he has no right to do, I think, for all that, that it is a great disgrace to my poor father's honest memory, to have us turn beggars after his death, when he left us all so well provided for, if we had but known how to be satisfied."

"There is a natural rectitude in your heart," said Cecilia, "that the ablest casuists could not mend."

She then enquired whither they were removing, and Miss Belfield told her to Portland-street, Oxford-road,[1] where they were to have two apartments up two pair of stairs, and the use of a very good parlour, in which her brother might see his friends. "And this," added she, "is a luxury for which nobody can blame him, because if he has not the appearance of a decent home, no gentleman will employ him."

The Paddington house, she said, was already let, and

[1] Miss Belfield thinks some excuse needed for her brother's taking rooms in a good new street. Mr. Seward, one of the Streatham set, lived at No. 40, Portland Street; and Boswell died at No. 47, about twelve years later.

her mother was determined not to hire another, but still to live as penuriously as possible, in order, notwithstanding his remonstrances, to save all she could of her income for her son.

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Belfield, who very familiarly said she came to tell Cecilia they were *all in the wrong box* in letting her son know of the £10 bank note, "for," continued she, "he has a pride that would grace a duke, and he thinks nothing of his hardships, so long as nobody knows of them. So another time we must manage things better, and when we do him any good, not let him know a word of the matter. We'll settle it all among ourselves, and one day or other he'll be glad enough to thank us."

Cecilia, who saw Miss Belfield colour with shame at the freedom of this hint, now arose to depart: but Mrs. Belfield begged her not to go so soon, and pressed her with such urgency to again sit down, that she was obliged to comply.

She then began a warm commendation of her son, lavishly praising all his good qualities, and exalting even his defects, concluding with saying, "But, ma'am, for all he's such a complete gentleman, and for all he's made so much of, he was so diffident, I could not get him to call and thank you for the present you made him, though, when he went his last airing, I almost knelt to him to do it. But, with all his merit, he wants as much encouragement as a lady, for I can tell you it is not a little will do for him."

Cecilia, amazed at this extraordinary speech, looked from the mother to the daughter in order to discover its meaning, which, however, was soon rendered plainer by what followed.

"But pray now, ma'am, don't think him the more ungrateful for his shyness, for young ladies so high in the world as you are, must go pretty good lengths before a young man will get courage to speak to them. And though I have told my son over and over that the ladies never like a man the worse for being a little bold, he's so much down in the mouth that it has no effect upon him. But it all comes of his being brought up at the university, for that makes him think he knows better than I can tell him. And

so, to be sure, he does. However, for all that, it is a hard thing upon a mother to find all she says goes just for nothing. But I hope you'll excuse him, ma'am, for it's nothing in the world but his over-modesty."

Cecilia now stared with a look of so much astonishment and displeasure, that Mrs. Belfield, suspecting she had gone rather too far, added, "I beg you won't take what I've said amiss, ma'am, for we mothers of families are more used to speak out than maiden ladies. And I should not have said so much, but only I was afraid you would misconstrue my son's backwardness; and so that he might be flung out of your favour at last, and all for nothing but having too much respect for you."

"O, dear mother!" cried Miss Belfield, whose face was the colour of scarlet, "pray!"——

"What's the matter now?" cried Mrs. Belfield; "you are as shy as your brother; and if we are all to be so, when are we to come to an understanding?"

"Not immediately, I believe, indeed," said Cecilia, rising; "but that we may not plunge deeper in our mistakes, I will for the present take my leave."

"No, ma'am," cried Mrs. Belfield, stopping her, "pray don't go yet, for I've got a great many things I want to talk to you about. In the first place, ma'am, pray what is your opinion of this scheme for sending my son abroad into foreign parts? I don't know what you may think of it, but as to me, it half drives me out of my senses to have him taken away from me at last in that unnatural manner. And I'm sure, ma'am, if you would only put in a word against it, I dare say he would give it up without a demur."

"Me?" cried Cecilia, disengaging herself from her hold, "No, madam, you must apply to those friends who better understand his affairs, and who would have a deeper interest in detaining him."

"Lack-a-day!" cried Mrs. Belfield, with scarcely smothered vexation, "how hard it is to make these grand young ladies come to reason! As to my son's other friends, what good will it do for him to mind what they say? who can expect him to give up his journey, without knowing what amends he shall get for it?"

"You must settle this matter with him at your leisure," said Cecilia, "I cannot now stay another moment."

Mrs. Belfield, again finding she had been too precipitate, tried to draw back, saying, "Pray, ma'am, don't let what I have mentioned go against my son in your good opinion, for he knows no more of it than the furthest person in the world, as my daughter can testify: for as to shyness, he's just as shy as a lady himself; so what good he ever got at the University, as to the matter of making his fortune, it's what I never could discover. However, I dare say he knows best; though when all comes to all, if I was to speak my mind, I think he's made but a poor hand of it."

Cecilia, who only through compassion to the blushing Henrietta forbore repressing this forwardness more seriously, merely answered Mrs. Belfield by wishing her good morning: but, while she was taking a kinder leave of her timid daughter, the mother added, "As to the present, ma'am, you was so kind to make us, Henny can witness for me every penny of it shall go to my son."

"I rather meant it," said Cecilia, "for your daughter; but if it is of use to anybody, my purpose is sufficiently answered."

Mrs. Belfield again pressed her to sit down, but she would not again listen to her, coldly saying, "I am sorry you troubled Mr. Belfield with any mention of what passed between his sister and me, but should you speak of it again, I beg you will explain to him that he had no concern in that little transaction, which belonged wholly to ourselves."

She then hastened down stairs, followed, however, by Mrs. Belfield, making awkward excuses for what she had said, intermixed with frequent hints that she knew all the time she was in the right.

This little incident, which convinced Cecilia Mrs. Belfield was firmly persuaded she was in love with her son, gave her much uneasiness; she feared the son himself might entertain the same notion, and thought it most probable the daughter also had imbibed it, though but for the forward vulgarity of the sanguine mother, their opinions might long have remained concealed. Her benevolence towards them, notwithstanding its purity, must now therefore cease to be exerted: nor could she even visit Miss Belfield, since pru-

dence, and a regard for her own character, seemed immediately to prohibit all commerce with the family.

"And thus difficult," cried she, "is the blameless use of riches, though all who want them, think nothing so easy as their disposal! This family I have so much wished to serve, I may at last only have injured, since the disappointment of their higher expectations, may render all smaller benefits contemptible. And thus this unfortunate misconstruction of my good offices, robs them of a useful assistant, and deprives me at the same time of an amiable companion."

As soon as she returned home, she had a letter put into her hand which came from Mr. Marriot, whose servant had twice called for an answer in the short time she had been absent.

This letter contained a most passionate avowal of the impression she had made on his heart the preceding evening, and an angry complaint that Mr. Harrel had refused to hear his proposals. He entreated her permission to wait upon her for only five minutes, and concluded with the most fervent professions of respect and admiration.

The precipitancy of this declaration served merely to confirm the opinion she had already conceived of the weakness of his understanding: but the obstinacy of Mr. Harrel irritated and distressed her; though weary of expostulating with so hopeless a subject, whom neither reason nor gratitude could turn from his own purposes, she was obliged to submit to his management, and was well content, in the present instance, to affirm his decree. She therefore wrote a concise answer to her new admirer, in the usual form of civil rejection.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ACCOMMODATION.

CECILIA was informed the next morning that a young woman begged to speak with her, and upon sending for her up stairs, she saw, to her great surprise, Miss Belfield.

She came in fear and trembling, sent, she said, by her mother, to entreat her pardon for what had passed the preceding day; "But I know, madam," she added, "you cannot pardon it, and therefore all that I mean to do is to clear my brother from any share in what was said, for indeed he has too much sense to harbour any such presumption; and to thank you with a most grateful heart for all the goodness you have shown us."

And then, modestly curtseying, she would have returned home; but Cecilia, much touched by her gentleness, took her hand, and kindly reviving her by assurances of esteem, entreated that she would lengthen her stay.

"How good is this, madam," said she, "after having so much reason to think so ill of me and of all of us! I tried all in my power to undeceive my mother, or at least to keep her quiet; but she was so much persuaded she was right, that she never would listen to me, and always said, did I suppose it was for *me* you condescended to come so often?"

"Yes," answered Cecilia, "most undoubtedly; had I not known you, however well I might have wished your brother, I should certainly not have visited at his house. But I am very happy to hear the mistake has spread no further."

"No indeed, madam, I never once thought of it; and as to my brother, when my mother only hinted it to him, he was quite angry. But, though I don't mean to vindicate what has happened, you will not, I hope, be displeased if I say my mother is much more pardonable than she seems to be, for the same mistake she made with you, she would have been as apt to have made with a princess; it was not, therefore, from any want of respect, but merely from thinking my brother might marry as high as he pleased, and believing no lady would refuse him, if he would but have the courage to speak."

Cecilia assured her she would think no more of the error, but told her that to avoid its renewal, she must decline calling upon her again till her brother was gone. She begged therefore to see her in Portman-square whenever she had leisure, repeatedly assuring her of her good opinion and regard, and of the pleasure with which she should seize every opportunity of showing them.

Delighted by a reception so kind, Miss Belfield remained

with her all the morning; and when at last she was obliged to leave her, she was but too happy in being solicited to repeat her visit.

She suffered one day only to elapse before she showed her readiness to accept the friendship that was offered her; and Cecilia, much pleased by this eagerness, redoubled her efforts to oblige and to serve her.

From this time, hardly a day passed in which she did not call in Portman-square, where nothing in her reception was omitted that could contribute to her contentment. Cecilia was glad to employ her mind in any way that related not to Delvile, whom she now earnestly endeavoured to think of no more, denying herself even the pleasure of talking of him with Miss Belfield, by the name of *her brother's noble friend.*

During this time she devised various methods, all too delicate to give even the shadow of offence, for making both useful and ornamental presents to her new favourite, with whom she grew daily more satisfied, and to whom she purposed hereafter offering a residence in her own house.

The trial of intimacy, so difficult to the ablest to stand, and from which even the most faultless are so rarely acquitted, Miss Belfield sustained with honour. Cecilia found her artless, ingenuous, and affectionate; her understanding was good, though no pains had been taken to improve it; her disposition though ardent was soft, and her mind seemed informed by intuitive integrity.

She communicated to Cecilia all the affairs of her family, disguising from her neither distress nor meanness, and seeking to palliate nothing but the grosser parts of the character of her mother. She seemed equally ready to make known to her even the most chosen secrets of her own bosom, for that such she had was evident, from a frequent appearance of absence and uneasiness which she took but little trouble to conceal. Cecilia, however, trusted not herself, in the present critical situation of her own mind, with any enquiries that might lead to a subject she was conscious she ought not to dwell upon: a short time, she hoped, would totally remove her suspense; but as she had much less reason to expect good than evil, she made it her immediate study to prepare for the worst, and therefore

carefully avoided all discourse that, by nourishing her tenderness, might weaken her resolution.

While thus, in friendly conversation and virtuous forbearance, passed gravely, but not unhappily, the time of Cecilia, the rest of the house was very differently employed: feasting, revelling, amusements of all sorts were pursued with more eagerness than ever, and the alarm which so lately threatened their destruction seemed now merely to heighten the avidity with which they were sought. Yet never was the disunion of happiness and diversion more striking and obvious: Mr. Harrel, in spite of his natural levity, was seized from time to time with fits of horror that embittered his gayest moments, and cast a cloud upon all his enjoyments. Always an enemy to solitude, he now found it wholly insupportable, and ran into company of any sort, less from a hope of finding entertainment, than from a dread of spending half an hour by himself.

Cecilia, who saw that his rapacity for pleasure encreased with his uneasiness, once more ventured to speak with his lady upon the subject of reformation; counselling her to take advantage of his present apparent discontent, which showed at least some sensibility of his situation, in order to point out to him the necessity of an immediate inspection into his affairs, which, with a total change in his way of life, was her only chance for snatching him from the dismal despondency into which he was sinking.

Mrs. Harrel declared herself unequal to following this advice, and said that her whole study was to find Mr. Harrel amusement, for he was grown so ill-humoured and petulant she quite feared being alone with him.

The house therefore now was more crowded than ever, and nothing but dissipation was thought of. Among those who upon this plan were courted to it, the foremost was Mr. Morrice, who, from a peculiar talent of uniting servility of conduct with gaiety of speech, made himself at once so agreeable and useful in the family, that in a short time they fancied it impossible to live without him. And Morrice, though his first view in obtaining admittance had been the cultivation of his acquaintance with Cecilia, was perfectly satisfied with the turn that matters had taken, since his utmost vanity had never led him to entertain any matri-

monial hopes with her, and he thought his fortune as likely to profit from the civility of her friends as of herself. For Morrice, however flighty and wild, had always at heart the study of his own interest; and though from a giddy forwardness of disposition he often gave offence, his meaning and his serious attention was not the less directed to the advancement of his own affairs: he formed no connection from which he hoped not some benefit, and he considered the acquaintance and friendship of his superiors in no other light than that of procuring him, sooner or later, recommendation to new clients.

Sir Robert Floyer also was more frequent than ever in his visits, and Mr. Harrel, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Cecilia, contrived every possible opportunity of giving him access to her. Mrs. Harrel herself, though hitherto neutral, now pleaded his cause with earnestness; and Mr. Arnott, who had been her former refuge from this persecution, grew so serious and so tender in his devoirs, that, unable any longer to doubt the sentiments she had inspired, she was compelled even with him to be guarded and distant. She now with daily concern looked back to the sacrifice she had made to the worthless and ungrateful Mr. Harrel, and was sometimes tempted to immediately choose another guardian, and leave his house for ever: yet the delicacy of her disposition was averse to any step that might publicly expose him, and her early regard for his wife would not suffer her to put it in execution.

These circumstances contributed strongly to encrease her intimacy with Miss Belfield; she now never saw Mrs. Delvile, whom alone she preferred to her, and from the troublesome assiduity of Sir Robert, scarce ever met Mr. Monckton but in his presence: she found, therefore, no resource against teasing and vexation, but what was afforded her by the conversation of the amiable Henrietta.

CHAPTER X.

A DETECTION.

A FORTNIGHT had now elapsed in which Cecilia had had no sort of communication with the Delviles, whom, equally from pride and from prudence, she forbore to seek herself, when one morning, while Miss Belfield was sitting with her, she was told by her maid that young Mr. Delvile was in the drawing-room, and begged the honour of seeing her for a few moments.

Cecilia, though she started and changed colour with surprise at this message, was unconscious she did either, from the yet greater surprise she received by the behaviour of Miss Belfield, who, hastily arising, exclaimed "Good God, Mr Delvile!——do you know Mr. Delvile, madam?—does Mr. Delvile visit at this house?"

"Sometimes; not often," answered Cecilia; "but why?"

"I don't know,—nothing, madam,—I only asked by accident, I believe,—but it's very—it's extremely—I did not know——" and colouring violently, she again sat down.

An apprehension the most painful now took possession of Cecilia, and absorbed in thought, she continued for some minutes silent and immoveable.

From this state she was awakened by her maid, who asked if she chose to have her gloves.

Cecilia, taking them from her without speaking, left the room, and not daring to stop for enquiry or consideration, hastened down stairs; but when she entered the apartment where young Delvile was waiting for her, all utterance seemed denied her, and she curtseyed without saying a word.

Struck with the look and uncommon manner of her entrance, he became in a moment as much disturbed as herself, pouring forth a thousand unnecessary and embarrassed apologies for his visit, and so totally forgetting even the reason why he made it, that he had taken his leave, and was departing before he recollected it. He then turned back, forcing a laugh at his own absence of mind,

and told her he had only called to acquaint her, that the commands with which she had honoured him were now obeyed, and, he hoped, to her satisfaction.

Cecilia, who knew not she had ever given him any, waited his further explanation; and he then informed her he had that very morning introduced Mr. Belfield to the Earl of Vannelt, who had already heard him very advantageously spoken of by some gentlemen to whom he had been known at the University, and who was so much pleased with him upon this first interview, that he meant, after a few enquiries, which could not but turn out to his credit, to commit his eldest son to his trust in making the tour of Europe.

Cecilia thanked him for her share in the trouble he had taken in this transaction; and then asked if Mrs. Delvile continued well.

"Yes," answered he with a smile half reproachful, "as well as one who having ever hoped your favour, can easily be after finding that hope disappointed. But much as she has taught her son, there is one lesson she might perhaps learn from him;—to fly, not seek, those dangerous indulgencies of which the deprivation is the loss of peace!"

He then bowed, and made his exit.

This unexpected reproof, and the yet more unexpected compliment that accompanied it, in both which *more seemed meant than met the ear*, encreased the perturbation into which Cecilia had already been thrown. It occurred to her that under the sanction of his mother's name, he had taken an opportunity of making an apology for his own conduct; yet why avoiding her society, if to that he alluded, should be *flying a dangerous indulgence*, she could not understand, since he had so little reason to fear any repulse in continuing to seek it.

Sorry, however, for the abrupt manner in which she had left Miss Belfield, she lost not a moment in hastening back to her; but when she came into the room, she found her employed in looking out of the window, her eye following some object with such earnestness of attention, that she perceived not her return.

Cecilia, who could not doubt the motive of her curiosity, had no great difficulty in forbearing to offer her any inter-

ruption. She drew her head back in a few minutes, and casting it upwards, with her hands clasped, softly whispered, "Heaven ever shield and bless him! and O, may he never feel such pain as I do!"

She then again looked out, but soon drawing herself in, said, in the same soft accents, "Oh why art thou gone! sweetest and noblest of men! why might I not see thee longer, when, under heaven, there is no other blessing I wish for!"

A sigh which at these words escaped Cecilia, made her start and turn towards the door; the deepest blushes overspread the cheeks of both as their eyes met each other, and while Miss Belfield trembled in every limb at the discovery she had made, Cecilia herself was hardly able to stand.

A painful and most embarrassed silence succeeded, which was only broken by Miss Belfield's bursting into tears.

Cecilia, extremely moved, forgot for a moment her own interest in what was passing, and tenderly approaching, embraced her with the utmost kindness: but still she spoke not, fearing to make any enquiry, from dreading to hear any explanation.

Miss Belfield, soothed by her softness, clung about her, and hiding her face in her arms, sobbed out "Ah, madam! who ought to be unhappy if befriended by you! if I could help it, I would love nobody else in almost the whole world. But you must let me leave you now, and to-morrow I will tell you everything."

Cecilia, who had no wish for making any opposition, embraced her again, and suffered her quietly to depart.

Her own mind was now in a state of the utmost confusion. The rectitude of her heart and the soundness of her judgment had hitherto guarded her both from error and blame, and, except during her recent suspense, had preserved her tranquillity inviolate: but her commerce with the world had been small and confined, and her actions had had little reference but to herself. The case was now altered; and she was suddenly in a conjuncture of all others the most delicate, that of accidentally discovering a rival in a favourite friend.

The fondness she had conceived for Miss Belfield, and the sincerity of her intentions as well as promises to serve her,

made the detection of this secret peculiarly cruel: she had lately felt no pleasure but in her society, and looked forward to much future comfort from the continuance of her regard, and from their constantly living together: but now this was no longer even to be desired, since the utter annihilation of the wishes of both, by young Delvile's being disposed of to a third person, could alone render eligible their dwelling under the same roof.

Her pity, however, for Miss Belfield was almost wholly unallayed by jealousy; she harboured not any suspicion that she was loved by young Delvile, whose aspiring spirit led her infinitely more to fear some higher rival, than to believe he bestowed even a thought upon the poor Henrietta: but still she wished with the utmost ardour to know the length of their acquaintance, how often they had met, when they had conversed, what notice he had taken of her, and how so dangerous a preference had invaded her heart.

But though this curiosity was both natural and powerful, her principal concern was the arrangement of her own conduct: the next day Miss Belfield was to tell her everything by a voluntary promise; but she doubted if she had any right to accept such a confidence. Miss Belfield, she was sure, knew not she was interested in the tale, since she had not even imagined that Delvile was known to her. She might hope, therefore, not only for advice but assistance, and fancy that while she reposed her secret in the bosom of a friend, she secured herself her best offices and best wishes for ever.

Would she obtain them? no; the most romantic generosity would revolt from such a demand, for however precarious was her own chance with young Delvile, Miss Belfield she was sure could not have any · neither her birth nor education fitted her for his rank in life, and even were both unexceptionable, the smallness of her fortune, as Mr. Monckton had instructed her, would be an obstacle insurmountable.

Would it not be a kind of treachery to gather from her everything, yet aid her in nothing? to take advantage of her unsuspicious openness in order to learn all that related to one whom she yet hoped would belong ultimately to herself, and gratify an interested curiosity at the expense

of a candour not more simple than amiable? "No," cried Cecilia, "arts that I could never forgive, I never will practice; this sweet but unhappy girl shall tell me nothing: betrayed already by the tenderness of her own heart, she shall at least suffer no further from any duplicity in mine. If, indeed, Mr. Delvile, as I suspect, is engaged elsewhere, I will make this gentle Henrietta the object of my future solicitude; the sympathy of our situations will not then divide but unite us, and I will take her to my bosom, hear all her sorrows, and calm her troubled spirit by participating in her sensibility. But if, on the contrary, this mystery ends more happily for myself, if Mr. Delvile has now no other engagement, and hereafter clears his conduct to my satisfaction, I will not be accessary to loading her future recollection with the shame of a confidence she then cannot but repent, nor with an injury to her delicacy that may wound it for ever."

She determined, therefore, carefully to avoid the subject for the present, since she could offer no advice for which she might not, hereafter, be suspected of selfish motives; but yet, from a real regard to the tender-hearted girl, to give all the tacit discouragement that was in her power, to a passion which she firmly believed would be productive of nothing but misery.

Once, from the frankness natural to her disposition, she thought not merely of receiving but returning her confidence: her better judgment, however, soon led her from so hazardous a plan, which could only have exposed them both to a romantic humiliation, by which, in the end, their mutual expectations might prove sources of mutual distrust.

When Miss Belfield, therefore, the next morning, her air unusually timid, and her whole face covered with blushes, made her visit, Cecilia, not seeming to notice her confusion, told her she was very sorry she was obliged to go out herself, and contrived, under various pretences, to keep her maid in the room. Miss Belfield, supposing this to be accidental, rejoiced in her imaginary reprieve, and soon recovered her usual cheerfulness: and Cecilia, who really meant to call upon Mrs. Delvile, borrowed Mrs. Harrel's carriage, and set down her artless young friend at her new

lodgings in Portland-street, before she proceeded to St. James's-square, talking the whole time upon matters of utter indifference.

CHAPTER XI.

A SARCASM.

THE reproach which Cecilia had received from young Delvile in the name of his mother, determined her upon making this visit; for though, in her present uncertainty, she wished only to see that family when sought by themselves, she was yet desirous to avoid all appearance of singularity, lest any suspicions should be raised of her sentiments.

Mrs. Delvile received her with a cold civility that chilled and afflicted her: she found her seriously offended by her long absence, and now for the first time perceived that haughtiness of character which hitherto she had thought only given to her by the calumny of envy; for though her displeasure was undisguised, she deigned not to make any reproaches, evidently showing that her disappointment in the loss of her society, was embittered by a proud regret for the kindness she believed she had thrown away. But though she scrupulously forbore the smallest complaint, she failed not from time to time to cast out reflections upon fickleness and caprice the most satirical and pointed.

Cecilia, who could not possibly avow the motives of her behaviour, ventured not to offer any apology for her apparent negligence; but, hitherto accustomed to the most distinguished kindness, a change to so much bitterness, shocked and overpowered her, and she sat almost wholly silent, and hardly able to look up.

Lady Honoria Pemberton, a daughter of the Duke of Derwent, now came into the room, and afforded her some relief by the sprightliness of her conversation. This young lady, who was a relation of the Delviles, and of a character the most airy and unthinking, ran on during her whole visit in a vein of fashionable scandal, with a levity that the

censures of Mrs. Delvile, though by no means spared, had no power to control: and, after having completely ransacked the topics of the day, she turned suddenly to Cecilia, with whom during her residence in St. James's-square she had made some acquaintance, and said, "So I hear, Miss Beverley, that after half the town has given you to Sir Robert Floyer, and the other half to my Lord Derford, you intend, without regarding one side or the other, to disappoint them both, and give yourself to Mr. Marriot."

"Me? no, indeed," answered Cecilia, "your ladyship has been much misinformed."

"I hope so," said Mrs. Delvile, "for Mr. Marriot, by all I ever heard of him, seems to have but one recommendation, and that the last Miss Beverley ought to value, a good estate."

Cecilia, secretly delighted by a speech which she could not resist flattering herself had reference to her son, now a little revived, and endeavoured to bear some part in the conversation.

"Everybody one meets," cried Lady Honoria, "disposes of Miss Beverley to some new person; yet the common opinion is that Sir Robert Floyer will be the man. But, upon my word, for my own part, I cannot conjecture how she will manage among them, for Mr. Marriot declares he's determined he won't be refused, and Sir Robert vows that he'll never give her up. So we none of us know how it will end: but I am vastly glad she keeps them so long in suspense."

"If there is any suspense," said Cecilia, "I am at least sure it must be wilful. But why should your ladyship rejoice in it?"

"O, because it helps to torment them, and keeps something going forward. Besides, we are all looking in the news-papers every day, to see when they'll fight another duel for you."

"Another?" cried Cecilia; "indeed they have never yet fought any for me."

"O, I beg your pardon," answered her ladyship, "Sir Robert, you know, fought one for you in the beginning of the winter, with that Irish fortune-hunter who affronted you at the Opera."

"Irish fortune-hunter!" repeated Cecilia "how strangely has that quarrel been misrepresented! In the first place, I never was affronted at the Opera at all, and in the second, if your ladyship means Mr. Belfield, I question if he ever was in Ireland in his life."

"Well," cried Lady Honoria, "he might come from Scotland, for ought I know, but somewhere he certainly came from; and they tell me he is wounded terribly, and Sir Robert has had all his things packed up this month, that in case he should die, he may go abroad in a moment."

"And pray where, Lady Honoria," cried Mrs. Delvile, "do you contrive to pick up all this rattle?"

"O, I don't know; everybody tells me something, so I put it all together as well as I can. But I could acquaint you with a stranger piece of news than any you have heard yet."

"And what is that?"

"O, if I let you know it, you'll tell your son."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Delvile, laughing, "I shall probably forget it myself."

She then made some further difficulty, and Cecilia, uncertain if she was meant to be a party in the communication, strolled to a window; where, however, as Lady Honoria did not lower her voice, she heard her say "Why you must know I am told he keeps a mistress somewhere in Oxford-road. They say she's mighty pretty; I should like vastly to see her."

The consternation of Cecilia at this intelligence would certainly have betrayed all she so much wished to conceal, had not her fortunate removal to the window guarded her from observation. She kept her post, fearing to look round, but was much pleased when Mrs. Delvile, with great indignation answered, "I am sorry, Lady Honoria, you can find any amusement in listening to such idle scandal, which those who tell will never respect you for hearing. In times less daring in slander, the character of Mortimer would have proved to him a shield from all injurious aspersions; yet who shall wonder he could not escape, and who shall contemn the inventors of calumny, if Lady Honoria Pemberton condescends to be entertained with it?"

"Dear Mrs. Delvile," cried Lady Honoria, giddily, "you take me too seriously."

"And dear Lady Honoria," said Mrs. Delvile, "I would it were possible to make you take yourself seriously; for could you once see with clearness and precision how much you lower your own dignity, while you stoop to depreciate that of others, the very subjects that now make your diversion, would then, far more properly, move your resentment."

"Ay, but, dear madam," cried Lady Honoria, "if that were the case, I should be quite perfect, and then you and I should never quarrel, and I don't know what we should do for conversation."

And with these words, hastily shaking hands with her, she took leave.

"Such conversation," said Mrs. Delvile when she was gone, "as results from the mixture of fruitless admonition with incorrigible levity, would be indeed *more honoured in the breach than the observance.* But levity is so much the fashionable characteristic of the present age, that a gay young girl who, like Lady Honoria Pemberton, rules the friends by whom she ought to be ruled, had little chance of escaping it."

"She seems so open, however, to reproof," said Cecilia, "that I should hope in a short time she may also be open to conviction."

"No," answered Mrs. Delvile, "I have no hope of her at all. I once took much pains with her; but I soon found that the easiness with which she hears of her faults, is only another effect of the levity with which she commits them. But if the young are never tired of erring in conduct, neither are the older in erring in judgment; the fallability of *mine* I have indeed very lately experienced."

Cecilia, who strongly felt the poignancy of this sarcasm, and whose constant and unaffected value of Mrs. Delvile by no means deserved it, was again silenced, and again most cruelly depressed: nor could she secretly forbear repining that at the very moment she found herself threatened with a necessity of foregoing the society of her new favourite, Miss Belfield, the woman in the whole

world whom she most wished to have for her friend, from an unhappy mistake was ready to relinquish her. Grieved to be thus fallen in her esteem, and shocked that she could offer no justification, after a short and thoughtful pause, she gravely arose to take leave.

Mrs. Delvile then told her that if she had any business to transact with Mr. Delvile, she advised her to acquaint him with it soon, as the whole family left town in a few days.

This was a new and severe blow to Cecilia, who sorrowfully repeated "In a few days, madam?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Delvile; "I hope you intend to be much concerned?"

"Ah, madam!" cried Cecilia, who could no longer preserve her quietness, "if you knew but half the respect I bear you, but half the sincerity with which I value and revere you, all protestations would be useless, for all accusations would be over!"

Mrs. Delvile, at once surprised and softened by the warmth of this declaration, instantly took her hand, and said "They shall now, and for ever be over, if it pains you to hear them. I concluded that what I said would be a matter of indifference to you, or all my displeasure would immediately have been satisfied, when once I had intimated that your absence had excited it."

"That I have excited it at all," answered Cecilia, "gives me indeed the severest uneasiness; but believe me, madam, however unfortunately appearances may be against me, I have always had the highest sense of the kindness with which you have honoured me, and never has there been the smallest abatement in the veneration, gratitude, and affection I have inviolably borne you."

"You see, then," said Mrs. Delvile, with a smile, "that where reproof takes any effect, it is not received with that easiness you were just now admiring: on the contrary, where a concession is made without pain, it is also made without meaning, for it is not in human nature to project any amendment without a secret repugnance. That here, however, you should differ from Lady Honoria Pemberton, who can wonder, when you are superior to all comparison with her in every thing?"

"Will you then," said Cecilia, "accept my apology, and forgive me?"

"I will do more," said Mrs. Delvile, laughing, "I will forgive you *without* an apology; for the truth is I have heard none! But come," continued she, perceiving Cecilia much abashed by this comment, "I will enquire no more about the matter; I am glad to receive my young friend again, and even half ashamed, deserving as she is, to say *how* glad!"

She then embraced her affectionately, and owned she had been more mortified by her fancied desertion than she had been willing to own even to herself, repeatedly assuring her that for many years she had not made any acquaintance she so much wished to cultivate, nor enjoyed any society from which she had derived so much pleasure.

Cecilia, whose eyes glistened with modest joy, while her heart beat quick with revived expectation, in listening to an effusion of praise so infinitely grateful to her, found little difficulty in returning her friendly professions, and, in a few minutes, was not merely reconciled, but more firmly united with her than ever.

Mrs. Delvile insisted upon keeping her to dinner, and Cecilia, but too happy in her earnestness, readily agreed to send Mrs. Harrel an excuse.

Neither of the Mr. Delviles spent the day at home, and nothing, therefore, disturbed or interrupted those glowing and delightful sensations which spring from a cordial renewal of friendship and kindness. The report, indeed, of Lady Honoria Pemberton gave her some uneasiness, yet the flighty character of that lady, and Mrs. Delvile's reply to it, soon made her drive it from her mind.

She returned home early in the evening, as other company was expected, and she had not changed her dress since the morning; but she first made a promise to see Mrs. Delvile some part of every day during the short time that she meant to remain in town.

CHAPTER XII.

A SURMISE.

THE next morning opened with another scene; Mrs. Harrel ran into Cecilia's room before breakfast, and acquainted her that Mr. Harrel had not been at home all night.

The consternation with which she heard this account she instantly endeavoured to dissipate, in order to soften the apprehension with which it was communicated: Mrs. Harrel, however, was extremely uneasy, and sent all the town over to make enquiries, but without receiving any intelligence.

Cecilia, unwilling to leave her in a state of such alarm, wrote an excuse to Mrs. Delvile, that she might continue with her till some information was procured. A subject also of such immediate concern was sufficient apology for avoiding any particular conversation with Miss Belfield, who called as usual, about noon, and whose susceptible heart was much affected by the evident disturbance in which she found Cecilia.

The whole day passed, and no news arrived: but, greatly to her astonishment, Mrs. Harrel in the evening prepared for going to an assembly! yet declaring at the same time it was extremely disagreeable to her, only she was afraid, if she stayed away, everybody would suppose something was the matter.

"Who then at last," thought Cecilia, "are half so much the slaves of the world as the gay and the dissipated? Those who work for hire, have at least their hours of rest; those who labour for subsistence, are at liberty when subsistence is procured; but those who toil to please the vain and the idle, undertake a task which can never be finished, however scrupulously all private peace, and all internal comfort, may be sacrificed in reality to the folly of saving appearances!"

Losing, however, the motive for which she had given up her own engagement, she now sent for her chair, in order to spend an hour or two with Mrs. Delvile.

The servants, as they conducted her up stairs, said they would call their lady; and in entering the drawing room she saw, reading and alone, young Delvile.

He seemed much surprised, but received her with the utmost respect, apologizing for the absence of his mother, who he said had understood she was not to see her till the next day, and had left him to write letters now, that she might then be at liberty.

Cecilia, in return, made excuses for her seeming inconsistency; after which, for some time, all conversation dropt.

The silence was at length broken by young Delvile's saying, "Mr. Belfield's merit has not been thrown away upon Lord Vannelt; he has heard an excellent character of him from all his former acquaintance, and is now fitting up an apartment for him in his own house till his son begins his tour."

Cecilia said she was very happy in hearing such intelligence; and then again they were both silent.

"You have seen," said young Delvile, after this second pause, "Mr. Belfield's sister?"

Cecilia, not without changing colour, answered, "Yes, sir."

"She is very amiable," he continued, "too amiable, indeed, for her situation, since her relations, her brother alone excepted, are all utterly unworthy of her."

He stopt; but Cecilia made no answer, and he presently added, "Perhaps you do not think her amiable?——you may have seen more of her, and know something to her disadvantage?"

"O no!" cried Cecilia, with a forced alacrity, "but only I was thinking that——did you say you knew all her relations?"

"No," he answered, "but when I have been with Mr. Belfield, some of them have called upon him."

Again they were both silent; and then Cecilia, ashamed of her apparent backwardness to give praise, compelled herself to say, "Miss Belfield is indeed a very sweet girl, and I wish—" she stopt, not well knowing herself what she meant to add.

"I have been greatly pleased," said he, after waiting

some time to hear if she would finish her speech, "by being informed of your goodness to her, and I think she seems equally to require and to deserve it. I doubt not you will extend it to her when she is deprived of her brother, for then will be the time that by doing her most service, it will reflect on yourself most honour."

Cecilia, confounded by this recommendation, faintly answered, "Certainly,——whatever is in my power,—I shall be very glad——"

And just then Mrs. Delvile made her appearance, and during the mutual apologies that followed, her son left the room. Cecilia, glad of any pretence to leave it also, insisted upon giving no interruption to Mrs. Delvile's letter writing, and having promised to spend all the next day with her, hurried back to her chair.

The reflections that followed her thither were by no means the most soothing: she began now to apprehend that the pity she had bestowed upon Miss Belfield, Miss Belfield in a short time might bestow upon her: at any other time, his recommendation would merely have served to confirm her opinion of his benevolence, but in her present state of anxiety and uncertainty, everything gave birth to conjecture, and had power to alarm her. He had behaved to her of late with the strangest coldness and distance,——his praise of Henrietta had been ready and animated.—Henrietta she knew adored him, and, she knew not with what reason,—but an involuntary suspicion arose in her mind, that the partiality she had herself once excited, was now transferred to that little-dreaded, but not less dangerous rival.

Yet, if such was the case, what was to become either of the pride or the interest of his family? Would his relations ever pardon an alliance stimulated neither by rank nor riches? would Mr. Delvile, who hardly ever spoke but to the high-born, without seeming to think his dignity somewhat injured, deign to receive for a daughter-in-law the child of a citizen and tradesman? would Mrs. Delvile herself, little less elevated in her notions, though infinitely softer in her manners, ever condescend to acknowledge her? Cecilia's own birth and connections, superior as they were to those of Miss Belfield, were even openly disdained by

Mr. Delvile, and all her expectations of being received into his family were founded upon the largeness of her fortune, in favour of which the brevity of her genealogy might perhaps pass unnoticed. But what was the chance of Miss Belfield, who neither had ancestors to boast, nor wealth to allure?

This thought, however, awakened all the generosity of her soul: "If," cried she, "the advantages I possess are merely those of riches, how little should I be flattered by any appearance of preference! and how ill can I judge with what sincerity it may be offered! happier in that case is the lowly Henrietta, who to poverty may attribute neglect, but who can only be sought and caressed from motives of purest regard. She loves Mr. Delvile, loves him with the most artless affection:—perhaps, too, he loves her in return,—why else his solicitude to know my opinion of her, and why so sudden his alarm when he thought it unfavourable? Perhaps he means to marry her, and to sacrifice to her innocence and her attractions all plans of ambition, and all views of aggrandizement:—thrice happy Henrietta, if such is thy prospect of felicity! to have inspired a passion so disinterested, may humble the most insolent of thy superiors, and teach even the wealthiest to envy thee!"

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

A BOLD STROKE.

WHEN Cecilia returned home, she heard with much concern that no tidings of Mr. Harrel had yet been obtained. His lady, who did not stay out late, was now very seriously frightened, and entreated Cecilia to sit up with her till some news could be procured: she sent also for her brother; and they all three, in trembling expectation of what was to ensue, passed the whole night in watching.

At six o'clock in the morning Mr. Arnott besought his sister and Cecilia to take some rest, promising to go out himself to every place where Mr. Harrel was known to resort, and not to return without bringing some account of him.

Mrs. Harrel, whose feelings were not very acute, finding the persuasions of her brother were seconded by her own fatigue, consented to follow his advice, and desired him to begin his search immediately.

A few moments after he was gone, while Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia were upon the stairs, they were startled by a violent knocking at the door. Cecilia, prepared for some calamity, hurried her friend back to the drawing-room, and then flying out of it again to enquire who entered, saw to her equal surprise and relief, Mr. Harrel himself.

She ran back with the welcome information, and he instantly followed her. Mrs. Harrel eagerly told him of her fright, and Cecilia expressed her pleasure at his return: but the satisfaction of neither was of long duration.

He came into the room with a look of fierceness the most terrifying, his hat on, and his arms folded. He made no answer to what they said, but pushed back the door with his foot, and flung himself upon a sofa.

Cecilia would now have withdrawn, but Mrs. Harrel caught her hand to prevent her. They continued some minutes in this situation; and then Mr. Harrel, suddenly rising, called out, "Have you anything to pack up?"

"Pack up?" repeated Mrs. Harrel; "Lord bless me, for what?"

"I am going abroad," he answered; "I shall set off to-morrow."

"Abroad?" cried she, bursting into tears; "I am sure I hope not!"

"Hope nothing!" returned he, in a voice of rage; and then, with a dreadful oath, he ordered her to leave him and pack up.

Mrs. Harrel, wholly unused to such treatment, was frightened into violent hysterics; of which, however, he took no notice, but swearing at her for *a fool who had been the cause of his ruin*, he left the room.

Cecilia, though she instantly rang the bell, and hastened to her assistance, was so much shocked by this unexpected brutality, that she scarcely knew how to act, or what to order. Mrs. Harrel, however, soon recovered, and Cecilia accompanied her to her own apartment, where she stayed, and endeavoured to sooth her till Mr. Arnott returned.

The terrible state in which Mr. Harrel had at last come home, was immediately communicated to him; and his sister entreated him to use all his influence that the scheme for going abroad might be deferred, at least, if not wholly given up.

Fearfully he went on the embassy, but speedily, and with a look wholly dismayed, he returned. Mr. Harrel, he said, told him that he had contracted a larger debt of honour than he had any means to raise; and as he could not appear till it was paid, he was obliged to quit the kingdom without delay.

"Oh, brother!" cried Mrs. Harrel, "and can you suffer us to go?"

"Alas, my dear sister," answered he, "what can I do to

prevent it? and who, if I too am ruined, will in future help you?"

Mrs. Harrel then wept bitterly; nor could the gentle Mr. Arnott forbear, while he tried to comfort her, mixing his own tears with those of his beloved sister: but Cecilia, whose reason was stronger, and whose justice was offended, felt other sensations; and leaving Mrs. Harrel to the care of her brother, whose tenderness she infinitely compassionated, she retreated into her own room: not, however, to rest, the dreadful situation of the family made her forget she wanted it, but to deliberate upon what course she ought herself to pursue.

She determined, without any hesitation, against accompanying them in their flight, as the irreparable injury she was convinced she had already done her fortune, was more than sufficient to satisfy the most romantic ideas of friendship and humanity: but her own place of abode must now immediately be changed, and her choice rested only between Mr. Delvile and Mr. Briggs.

Important as were the obstacles which opposed her residence at Mr. Delvile's, all that belonged to inclination and to happiness encouraged it: while with respect to Mr. Briggs, though the objections were lighter, there was not a single allurement. Yet whenever the suspicion recurred to her that Miss Belfield was beloved by young Delvile, she resolved at all events to avoid him: but when better hopes intervened, and represented that his enquiries were probably accidental, the wish of being finally acquainted with his sentiments, made nothing so desirable as an intercourse more frequent.

Such still was her irresolution, when she received a message from Mr. Arnott to entreat the honour of seeing her. She immediately went down stairs, and found him in the utmost distress. "O, Miss Beverley," he cried, "what can I do for my sister! what can I possibly devise to relieve her affliction!"

"Indeed, I know not!" said Cecilia; "but the utter impracticability of preparing her for this blow, obviously as it has long been impending, makes it now fall so heavily, I wish much to assist her,—but a debt so unjustifiably contracted—"

"O, madam," interrupted he, "imagine not I sent to you with so treacherous a view as to involve you in our misery; far too unworthily has your generosity already been abused. I only wish to consult with you what I can do with my sister."

Cecilia, after some little consideration, proposed that Mrs. Harrel should still be left in England, and under their joint care.

"Alas!" cried he, "I have already made that proposal, but Mr. Harrel will not go without her, though his whole behaviour is so totally altered, that I fear to trust her with him."

"Who is there, then, that has more weight with him?" said Cecilia; "shall we send for Sir Robert Floyer to second our request?"

To this Mr. Arnott assented, forgetting in his apprehension of losing his sister, the pain he should suffer from the interference of his rival.

The baronet presently arrived, and Cecilia, not choosing to apply to him herself, left him with Mr. Arnott, and waited for intelligence in the library.

In about an hour after, Mrs. Harrel ran into the room, her tears dried up, and out of breath with joy, and called out, "My dearest friend, my fate is now all in your hands, and I am sure you will not refuse to make me happy."

"What is it I can do for you?" cried Cecilia, dreading some impracticable proposal; "Ask me not, I beseech you, what I cannot perform!"

"No, no," answered she; "what I ask requires nothing but good nature. Sir Robert Floyer has been begging Mr. Harrel to leave me behind; and he has promised to comply, upon condition you will hasten your marriage, and take me into your own house."

"My marriage!" cried the astonished Cecilia.

Here they were joined by Mr. Harrel himself, who repeated the same offer.

"You both amaze and shock me!" cried Cecilia; "what is it you mean, and why do you talk to me so wildly?"

"Miss Beverley," cried Mr. Harrel, "it is high time now to give up this reserve, and trifle no longer with a gentleman so unexceptionable as Sir Robert Floyer. The whole

town has long acknowledged him as your husband, and you are everywhere regarded as his bride; a little frankness, therefore, in accepting him, will not only bind him to you for ever, but do credit to the generosity of your character."

At that moment Sir Robert himself burst into the room, and seizing one of her hands, while both of them were uplifted in mute amazement, he pressed it to his lips, poured forth a volley of such compliments as he had never before prevailed with himself to utter, and confidently entreated her to complete his long-attended happiness, without the cruelty of further delay.

Cecilia, almost petrified by the excess of her surprise, at an attack so violent, so bold, and apparently so sanguine, was for some time scarce able to speak or to defend herself; but when Sir Robert, presuming on her silence, said she had made him the happiest of men, she indignantly drew back her hand, and with a look of displeasure that required little explanation, would have walked out of the room; when Mr. Harrel, in a tone of bitterness and disappointment, called out, "Is this lady-like tyranny then never to end?" And Sir Robert, impatiently following her, said, "And is my suspense to endure for ever? After so many months attendance—"

"This, indeed, is something too much," said Cecilia, turning back: "You have been kept, sir, in no suspense; the whole tenor of my conduct has uniformly declared the same disapprobation I at present avow, and which my letter, at least, must have put beyond all doubt."

"Harrel," exclaimed Sir Robert, "did not you tell me—"

"Pho, pho," cried Harrel, "what signifies calling upon me? I never saw in Miss Beverley any disapprobation beyond what it is customary for young ladies of a sentimental turn to show; and everybody knows that where a gentleman is allowed to pay his devoirs for any length of time, no lady intends to use him very severely."

"And can you, Mr. Harrel," said Cecilia, "after such conversations as have passed between us, persevere in this wilful misapprehension? But it is in vain to debate where all reasoning is disregarded, or to make any protestations where even rejection is received as a favour."

And then, with an air of disdain, she insisted upon passing them, and went to her own room.

Mrs. Harrel, however, still followed, and clinging round her, still supplicated her pity and compliance.

"What infatuation is this!" cried Cecilia; "is it possible that you, too, can suppose I ever mean to accept Sir Robert?"

"To be sure I do," answered she; "for Mr. Harrel has told me a thousand times, that however you played the prude, you would be his at last."

Cecilia, though doubly irritated against Mr. Harrel, was now appeased with his lady, whose mistake, however ill-founded, offered an excuse for her behaviour; but she assured her in the strongest terms, that her repugnance to the baronet was unalterable, yet told her she might claim from her every good office that was not wholly unreasonable.

These were words of slender comfort to Mrs. Harrel, who well knew that her wishes and reason had but little affinity, and she soon, therefore, left the room.

Cecilia then resolved to go instantly to Mrs. Delvile, acquaint her with the necessity of her removal, and make her decision whither, according to the manner in which her intelligence should be received.

She sent, therefore, to order a chair, and was already in the hall, when she was stopt by the entrance of Mr. Monckton, who, addressing her with a look of haste and earnestness, said, "I will not ask whither you are going so early, or upon what errand, for I must beg a moment's audience, be your business what it may."

Cecilia then accompanied him to the deserted breakfast-room, which none but the servants had this morning entered; and there, grasping her hand, he said, "Miss Beverley, you must fly this house directly! it is the region of disorder and licentiousness, and unfit to contain you."

She assured him she was that moment preparing to quit it, but begged he would explain himself.

"I have taken care," he answered, "for some time past, to be well informed of all the proceedings of Mr. Harrel; and the intelligence I procured this morning is of the most alarming nature. I find he spent the night before the last entirely at a gaming-table, where, intoxicated by a run of

good luck, he passed the whole of the next day in rioting with his profligate intimates; and last night, returning again to his favourite amusement, he not only lost all he had gained, but much more than he could pay. Doubt not, therefore, but you will be called upon to assist him: he still considers you as his resource in times of danger, and while he knows you are under his roof, he will always believe himself secure."

"Every thing indeed conspires," said Cecilia, more shocked than surprised at this account, "to make it necessary I should quit his house: yet I do not think he has at present any further expectations from me, as he came into the room this morning not merely without speaking to me, but behaved with a brutality to Mrs. Harrel that he must be certain would give me disgust. It showed me, indeed, a new part of his character; for ill as I have long thought of him, I did not suspect he could be guilty of such unmanly cruelty."

"The character of a gamester," said Mr. Monckton, "depends solely upon his luck; his disposition varies with every throw of the dice; and he is airy, gay and good-humoured, or sour, morose and savage, neither from nature nor from principle, but wholly by the caprice of chance."

Cecilia then related to him the scene in which she had just been engaged with Sir Robert Floyer.

"This," cried he, "is a *manœuvre* I have been some time expecting: but Mr. Harrel, though artful and selfish, is by no means deep. The plan he had formed would have succeeded with some women, and he therefore concluded it would with all. So many of your sex have been subdued by perseverance, and so many have been conquered by boldness, that he supposed when he united two such powerful besiegers in the person of a baronet, he should vanquish all obstacles. By assuring you that the world thought the marriage already settled, he hoped to surprise you into believing there was no help for it, and by the suddenness and vehemence of the attack, to frighten and hurry you into compliance. His own wife, he knew, might have been managed thus with ease, and so, probably, might his sister, and his mother, and his cousin; for in love matters, or what are so called, women in general are readily duped.

He discerned not the superiority of your understanding to tricks so shallow and impertinent, nor the firmness of your mind in maintaining its own independence. No doubt but he was amply to have been rewarded for his assistance; and probably had you this morning been propitious, the baronet, in return, was to have cleared him from his present difficulty."

"Even in my own mind," said Cecilia, "I can no longer defend him; for he could never have been so eager to promote the interest of Sir Robert, in the present terrible situation of his own affairs, had he not been stimulated by some secret motives. His schemes and his artifices, however, will now be utterly lost upon me, since your warning and advice, aided by my own suffering experience of the inutility of all I can do for him, will effectually guard me from all his future attempts."

"Rest no security upon yourself," said Mr. Monckton, "since you have no knowledge of the many tricks and inventions by which you may be plundered. Perhaps he may beg permission to reside in your house in Suffolk, or desire an annuity for his wife, or choose to receive your first rents when you come of age; and whatever he may fix upon, his dagger and his bowl will not fail to procure him. A heart so liberal as yours can only be guarded by flight. You were going, you said, when I came—and whither?"

"To—to St. James's-square," answered she, with a deep blush.

"Indeed!—is young Delvile, then, going abroad?"

"Abroad?—no,—I believe not."

"Nay, I only imagined it from your choosing to reside in his house."

"I do not choose it," cried Cecilia, with quickness; "but is not any thing preferable to dwelling with Mr. Briggs?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Monckton, coolly; "nor should I have supposed he had any chance with you, had I not hitherto observed that your convenience has always been sacrificed to your sense of propriety."

Cecilia, touched by praise so full of censure, and earnest to vindicate her delicacy, after an internal struggle, which Mr. Monckton was too subtle to interrupt, protested she would go instantly to Mr. Briggs, and see if it were pos-

sible to be settled in his house, before she made any attempt to fix herself elsewhere.

"And when?" said Mr. Monckton.

"I don't know," answered she, with some hesitation, "perhaps this afternoon."

"Why not this morning?"

"I can go out no where this morning; I must stay with Mrs. Harrel."

"You thought otherwise when I came; you were then content to leave her."

Cecilia's alacrity, however, for changing her abode, was now at an end, and she would fain have been left quietly to re-consider her plans: but Mr. Monckton urged so strongly the danger of her lengthened stay in the house of so designing a man as Mr. Harrel, that he prevailed with her to quit it without delay, and had himself the satisfaction of handing her to her chair.

CHAPTER II.

A MISER'S MANSION.

MR. BRIGGS was at home, and Cecilia instantly and briefly informed him that it was inconvenient for her to live any longer at Mr. Harrel's, and that if she could be accommodated at his house, she should be glad to reside with him during the rest of her minority.

"Shall, shall," cried he, extremely pleased, "take you with all my heart. Warrant master Harrel's made a good penny of you. Not a bit the better for dressing so fine; many a rogue in a gold lace hat."[1]

[1] Saturday, December 28, 1782.—"Sir Joshua [Reynolds] had two snuff-boxes in use, a gold and a tin one; I examined them, and asked why he made use of such a vile and shabby tin one. 'Why,' said he, laughing, 'because I naturally love a little of the blackguard. Ay, and so do you too, little as you look as if you did, and all the people all day long are saying, where can you have seen such company as you treat us with?' 'Why you have seen such, Sir Joshua,' said Mr. West, taking up the tin snuff-box, 'for this box you must certainly have picked up at Briggs's sale.'"—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, page 218, vol. ii.

Cecilia begged to know what apartments he could spare for her.

"Take you up stairs," cried he; "show you a place for a queen."

He then led her up stairs, and took her to a room entirely dark, and so close for want of air, that she could hardly breathe in it. She retreated to the landing-place till he had opened the shutters, and then saw an apartment the most forlorn she had ever beheld, containing no other furniture than a ragged stuff bed, two worn-out rush-bottomed chairs, an old wooden box, and a bit of broken glass which was fastened to the wall by two bent nails.

"See here, my little chick," cried he, "every thing ready! and a box for your gimcracks into the bargain."

"You don't mean this place for me, sir!" cried Cecilia, staring.

"Do, do," cried he, "a deal nicer by and by. Only wants a little furbishing: soon put to rights. Never sweep a room out of use; only wears out brooms for nothing."

"But, sir, can I not have an apartment on the first floor?"

"No, no, something else to do with it; belongs to the club; secrets in all things! Make this do well enough. Come again next week; wear quite a new face. Nothing wanting but a table; pick you up one at a broker's."

"But I am obliged, sir, to leave Mr. Harrel's house directly."

"Well, well, make shift without a table at first; no great matter if you ha'n't one at all, nothing particular to do with it. Want another blanket, though. Know where to get one; a very good broker hard by. Understand how to deal with him! A close dog, but warm."

"I have also two servants, sir," said Cecilia.

"Won't have 'em! Sha'n't come! Eat me out of house and home."

"Whatever they eat, sir," answered she, "will be wholly at my expense, as will everything else that belongs to them."

"Better get rid of them: hate servants; all a pack of rogues; think of nothing but stuffing and guttling."

Then, opening another door, "See here," he cried, "my own room just by; snug as a church!"

Cecilia, following him into it, lost a great part of her surprise at the praise he had lavished upon that which he destined for herself, by perceiving that his own was yet more scantily furnished, having nothing in it but a miserable bed without any curtains, and a large chest, which, while it contained his clothes, sufficed both for table and chair.

"What are doing here?" cried he angrily, to a maid who was making the bed; "can't you take more care? beat out all the feathers; see! two on the ground; nothing but waste and extravagance! never mind how soon a man's ruined. Come to want, you slut, see that, come to want!"

"I can never want more than I do here," said the girl, "so that's one comfort."

Cecilia now began to repent she had made known the purport of her visit, for she found it would be utterly impossible to accommodate either her mind or her person to a residence such as was here to be obtained: and she only wished Mr. Monckton had been present, that he might himself be convinced of the impracticability of his scheme. Her whole business, therefore, now, was to retract her offer, and escape from the house.

"I see, sir," said she, when he turned from his servant, "that I cannot be received here without inconvenience, and therefore I will make some new arrangement in my plan."

"No, no," cried he, "like to have you, 'tis but fair, all in our turn; won't be chousel; Master Harrel's had his share. Sorry could not get you that sweet-heart! would not bite; soon find out another; never fret."

"But there are so many things with which I cannot possibly dispense," said Cecilia, "that I am certain my removing hither would occasion you far more trouble than you at present foresee."

"No, no; get all in order soon: go about myself; know how to bid; understand trap; always go shabby; no making a bargain in a good coat. Look sharp at the goods; say they won't do; come away; send somebody else for 'em. never go twice myself; nothing got cheap if one seems to have a hankering."

"But I am sure it is not possible," said Cecilia, hurrying down stairs, "that my room, and one for each of my servants, should be ready in time."

"Yes, yes," cried he, following her, "ready in a trice. Make a little shift at first; double the blanket till we get another; lie with the maid a night or two; never stand for a trifle."

And, when she was seated in her chair, the whole time disclaiming her intention of returning, he only pinched her cheek with a facetious smirk, and said, "By, by, little duck; come again soon. Warrant I'll have the room ready. Sha'n't half know it again; make it as smart as a carrot."

And then she left the house; fully satisfied that no one could blame her refusing to inhabit it, and much less chagrined than she was willing to suppose herself, in finding she had now no resource but in the Delviles.

Yet, in her serious reflections, she could not but think herself strangely unfortunate that the guardian with whom alone it seemed proper for her to reside, should by parsimony, vulgarity, and meanness, render riches contemptible, prosperity unavailing, and economy odious; and that the choice of her uncle should thus unhappily have fallen upon the lowest and most wretched of misers, in a city abounding with opulence, hospitality, and splendour, and of which the principal inhabitants, long eminent for their wealth and their probity, were now almost universally rising in elegance and liberality.

CHAPTER III.

A DECLARATION.

CECILIA'S next progress, therefore, was to St. James's-square, whither she went in the utmost anxiety, from her uncertainty of the reception with which her proposal would meet.

The servants informed her that Mr. and Mrs. Delvile were at breakfast, and that the Duke of Derwent and his two daughters were with them.

Before such witnesses to relate the reasons of her leaving the Harrels was impossible; and from such a party to send for Mrs. Delvile, would, by her stately guardian, be deemed

an indecorum unpardonable. She was obliged, therefore, to return to Portman-square, in order to open her cause in a letter to Mrs. Delvile.

Mr. Arnott, flying instantly to meet her, called out "O, madam, what alarm has your absence occasioned! My sister believed she should see you no more, Mr. Harrel feared a premature discovery of his purposed retreat, and we have all been under the cruellest apprehensions lest you meant not to come back."

"I am sorry I spoke not with you before I went out," said Cecilia, accompanying him to the library, "but I thought you were all too much occupied to miss me. I have been, indeed, preparing for a removal, but I meant not to leave your sister without bidding her adieu, nor, indeed, to quit any part of the family with so little ceremony. Is Mr. Harrel still firm to his last plan?"

"I fear so! I have tried what is possible to dissuade him, and my poor sister has wept without ceasing. Indeed, if she will take no consolation, I believe I shall do what she pleases, for I cannot bear the sight of her in such distress."

"You are too generous, and too good!" said Cecilia, "and I know not how, while flying from danger myself, to forbear counselling you to avoid it also."

"Ah, madam!" cried he, "the greatest danger for *me* is what I have now no power to run from!"

Cecilia, though she could not but understand him, felt not the less his friend for knowing him the humblest of her admirers; and as she saw the threatening ruin to which his too great tenderness exposed him, she kindly said "Mr. Arnott, I will speak to you without reserve. It is not difficult to see that the destruction which awaits Mr. Harrel, is ready also to ensnare his brother-in-law: but let not that blindness to the future which we have so often lamented for him, hereafter be lamented for yourself. Till his present connexions are broken, and his way of living is changed, nothing can be done for him, and whatever you were to advance, would merely be sunk at the gaming table. Reserve, therefore, your liberality till it may indeed be of service to him, for believe me, at present, his mind is as much injured as his fortune."

"And is it possible, madam," said Mr. Arnott, in an accent of surprise and delight, "that you can deign to be interested in what may become of *me!* and that *my* sharing or escaping the ruin of this house is not wholly indifferent to you?"

"Certainly not," answered Cecilia; "as the brother of my earliest friend, I can never be insensible to your welfare."

"Ah, madam!" cried he, "as her brother!——Oh that there were any other tie!"——

"Think a little," said Cecilia, preparing to quit the room, "of what I have mentioned, and, for your sister's sake, be firm now, if you would be kind hereafter."

"I will be any and every thing," cried he, "that Miss Beverley will command."

Cecilia, fearful of any misinterpretation, then came back, and gravely said, "No, sir, be ruled only by your own judgment: or, should my advice have any weight with you, remember it is given from the most disinterested motives, and with no other view than that of securing your power to be of service to your sister."

"For that sister's sake, then, have the goodness to hear my situation, and honour me with further directions."

"You will make me fear to speak," said Cecilia, "if you give so much consequence to my opinion. I have seen, however, nothing in your conduct I have ever wished changed, except too little attention to your own interest and affairs."

"Ah!" cried he, "with what rapture should I hear those words, could I but imagine——"

"Come, come," said Cecilia, smiling, "no digression! You called me back to talk of your sister; if you change your subject, perhaps you may lose your auditor."

"I would not, madam, for the world, encroach upon your goodness; the favour I have found has indeed always exceeded my expectations, as it has always surpassed my desert: yet has it never blinded me to my own unworthiness. Do not, then, fear to indulge me with your conversation; I shall draw from it no inference but of pity, and though pity from Miss Beverley is the sweetest balm

to my heart, it shall never seduce me to the encouragement of higher hopes."

Cecilia had long had reason to expect such a declaration, yet she heard it with unaffected concern, and looking at him with the utmost gentleness, said, "Mr. Arnott, your regard does me honour, and, were it somewhat more rational, would give me pleasure; take, then, from it what is more than I wish or merit, and, while you preserve the rest, be assured it will be faithfully returned."

"Your rejection is so mild," cried he, "that I, who had no hope of acceptance, find relief in having at last told my sufferings. Could I but continue to see you every day, and to be blest with your conversation, I think I should be happy, and I am sure I should be grateful."

"You are already," answered she, shaking her head, and moving towards the door, "infringing the conditions upon which our friendship is to be founded."

"Do not go, madam," he cried, "till I have done what you have just promised to permit, acquainted you with my situation, and been honoured with your advice. I must own to you, then, that £5,000 which I had in the stocks, as well as a considerable sum in a banker's hands, I have parted with, as I now find for ever: but I have no heart for refusal, nor would my sister at this moment be thus distressed, but that I have nothing more to give without I cut down my trees, or sell some farm, since all I was worth, except my landed property, is already gone. What, therefore, I can now do to save Mr. Harrel from this desperate expedition I know not."

"I am sorry," said Cecilia, "to speak with severity of one so nearly connected with you, yet, suffer me to ask, why should he be saved from it at all? and what is there he can at present do better? Has not he long been threatened with every evil that is now arrived? have we not both warned him, and have not the clamours of his creditors assailed him? yet what has been the consequence? he has not submitted to the smallest change in his way of life, he has not denied himself a single indulgence, nor spared any expense, nor thought of any reformation. Luxury has followed luxury, and he has only grown fonder of extravagance, as extravagance has become more dan-

gerous. Till the present storm, therefore, blows over, leave him to his fate, and when a calm succeeds, I will myself, for the sake of Priscilla, aid you to save what is possible of the wreck."

"All you say, madam, is as wise as it is good, and now I am acquainted with your opinion, I will wholly new model myself upon it, and grow as steady against all attacks as hitherto I have been yielding."

Cecilia was then retiring; but again detaining her, he said, "You spoke, madam, of a removal, and indeed it is high time you should quit this scene; yet I hope you intend not to go till to-morrow, as Mr. Harrel has declared your leaving him sooner will be his destruction."

"Heaven forbid," said Cecilia, "for I mean to be gone with all the speed in my power."

"Mr. Harrel," answered he, "did not explain himself; but I believe he apprehends your deserting his house at this critical time will raise a suspicion of his own design of going abroad, and make his creditors interfere to prevent him."

"To what a wretched state," cried Cecilia, "has he reduced himself! I will not, however, be the voluntary instrument of his disgrace; and if you think my stay is so material to his security, I will continue here till to-morrow morning."

Mr. Arnott almost wept his thanks for this concession, and Cecilia, happy in making it to him instead of Mr. Harrel, then went to her own room, and wrote the following letter to Mrs. Delvile.

To the Hon. Mrs. Delvile, St. James's-square.

Portman-square, June 12.

Dear Madam,

I am willing to hope you have been rather surprised that I have not sooner availed myself of the permission with which you yesterday honoured me of spending this whole day with you, but, unfortunately for myself, I am prevented waiting upon you even for any part of it. Do not, however, think me now ungrateful if I stay away, nor to-morrow impertinent, if I venture to enquire whether that

apartment which you had once the goodness to appropriate to my use, may then again be spared for me! The accidents which have prompted this strange request will, I trust, be sufficient apology for the liberty I take in making it, when I have the honour to see you, and acquaint you what they are. I am with the utmost respect,

Dear Madam,
your most obedient,
humble servant,
CECILIA BEVERLEY.

She would not have been thus concise, had not the caution of Mr. Arnott made her fear, in the present perilous situation of affairs, to trust the secret of Mr. Harrel to paper.

The following answer was returned her from Mrs. Delvile.

To Miss BEVERLEY, Portman-square.

THE accidents you mention, are not, I hope, of a very serious nature, since I shall find difficulty insurmountable in trying to lament them, if they are productive of a lengthened visit from my dear Miss Beverley to her

Faithful humble Servant,
AUGUSTA DELVILE.

Cecilia, charmed with this note, could now no longer forbear looking forward to brighter prospects, flattering herself that once under the roof of Mrs. Delvile, she must necessarily be happy, let the engagements or behaviour of her son be what they might.

CHAPTER IV.

A GAMESTER'S CONSCIENCE.

FROM this soothing prospect, Cecilia was presently disturbed by Mrs. Harrel's maid, who came to entreat she would hasten to her lady, whom she feared was going into fits.

Cecilia flew to her immediately, and found her in the most violent affliction. She used every kind effort in her power to quiet and console her, but it was not without the utmost difficulty she could sob out the cause of this fresh sorrow, which indeed was not trifling. Mr. Harrel, she said, had told her he could not possibly raise money even for his travelling expenses, without risking a discovery of his project, and being seized by his creditors; he had therefore charged her, *through her brother or her friend*, to procure for him £3,000, as less would not suffice to maintain them while abroad, and he knew no method by which he could have any remittances without danger. And, when she hesitated in her compliance, he furiously accused her of having brought on all this distress by her negligence and want of management, and declared that if she did not get the money, she would only be served as she merited by starving in a foreign gaol, which he swore would be the fate of them both.

The horror and indignation with which Cecilia heard this account were unspeakable. She saw evidently that she was again to be played upon by terror and distress, and the cautions and opinions of Mr. Monckton no longer appeared overstrained; *one year's income* was already demanded, the annuity and the country house might next be required: she rejoiced, however, that thus wisely forewarned, she was not liable to surprise, and she determined, be their entreaties or representations what they might, to be immovably steady in her purpose of leaving them the next morning.

Yet she could not but grieve at suffering the whole burthen of this clamorous imposition to fall upon the soft-hearted Mr. Arnott, whose inability to resist solicitation made him so unequal to sustaining its weight: but when Mrs. Harrel was again able to go on with her account, she heard, to her infinite surprise, that all application to her brother had proved fruitless. "He will not hear me," continued Mrs. Harrel, "and he never was deaf to me before! so now I have lost my only and last resource, my brother himself gives me up, and there is no one else upon earth who will assist me!"

"With pleasure, with readiness, with joy," cried Cecilia,

"should you find assistance from me, were it to you alone it were given; but to supply fuel for the very fire that is consuming you—no, no, my whole heart is hardened against gaming and gamesters, and neither now or ever will I suffer any consideration to soften me in their favour."

Mrs. Harrel only answered by tears and lamentations; and Cecilia, whose justice shut not out compassion, having now declared her purposed firmness, again attempted to sooth her, entreating her not to give way to such immoderate grief, since better prospects might arise from the very gloom now before her, and a short time spent in solitude and economy, might enable her to return to her native land with recovered happiness.

"No, I shall never return!" cried she, weeping, "I shall die, I shall break my heart before I have been banished a month! Oh, Miss Beverley, how happy are you! able to stay where you please,—rich,—rolling in wealth which you do not want—of which had we but *one* year's income only, all this misery would be over, and we might stay in our dear, dear country!"

Cecilia, struck by a hint that so nearly bordered upon reproach, and offended by seeing the impossibility of ever doing enough, while any thing remained to be done, forbore not without difficulty enquiring what next was expected from her, and whether any part of her fortune might be guarded, without giving room for some censure! but the deep affliction of Mrs. Harrel soon removed her resentment, and scarcely thinking her, while in a state of such wretchedness, answerable for what she said, after a little recollection, she mildly replied "As affluence is all comparative, you may at present think I have more than my share: but the time is only this moment past, when your own situation seemed as subject to the envy of others as mine may be now. My future destiny is yet undetermined, and the occasion I may have for my fortune is unknown to myself; but whether I possess it in peace or in turbulence, whether it proves to me a blessing or an injury, so long as I can call it my own, I shall always remember with alacrity the claim upon that and upon me which early friendship has so justly given Mrs. Harrel. Yet permit me, at the same time, to add, that I do not hold myself so entirely independent as you may pro-

bably suppose me. I have not, it is true, any relations to call me to account, but respect for their memory supplies the place of their authority, and I cannot, in the distribution of the fortune which has devolved to me, forbear sometimes considering how they would have wished it should be spent, and always remembering that what was acquired by industry and labour, should never be dissipated in idleness and vanity. Forgive me for thus speaking to the point; you will not find me less friendly to yourself, for this frankness with respect to your situation."

Tears were again the only answer of Mrs. Harrel; yet Cecilia, who pitied the weakness of her mind, stayed by her with the most patient kindness till the servants announced dinner. She then declared she would not go down stairs: but Cecilia so strongly represented the danger of awakening suspicion in the servants that she at last prevailed with her to make her appearance.

Mr. Harrel was already in the parlour, and enquiring for Mr. Arnott, but was told by the servants he had sent word he had another engagement. Sir Robert Floyer also kept away, and, for the first time since her arrival in town, Cecilia dined with no other company than the master and mistress of the house.

Mrs. Harrel could eat nothing; Cecilia, merely to avoid creating surprise in the servants, forbore following her example; but Mr. Harrel eat much as usual, talked all dinner time, was extremely civil to Cecilia, and discovered not by his manners the least alteration in his affairs.

When the servants were gone, he desired his wife to step for a moment with him into the library. They soon returned, and then Mr. Harrel, after walking in a disordered manner about the room, rang the bell, and ordered his hat and cane, and as he took them, said "If this fails—" and, stopping short, without speaking to his wife, or even bowing to Cecilia, he hastily went out of the house.

Mrs. Harrel told Cecilia that he had merely called her to know the event of her two petitions, and had heard her double failure in total silence. Whither he was now gone it was not easy to conjecture, nor what was the new resource which he still seemed to think worth trying; but the manner of his quitting the house, and the threat implied

by *if this fails*, contributed not to lessen the grief of Mrs. Harrel, and gave to Cecilia herself the utmost alarm.

They continued together till tea-time, the servants having been ordered to admit no company. Mr. Harrel himself then returned, and returned, to the amazement of Cecilia, accompanied by Mr. Marriot.

He presented that young man to both the ladies as a gentleman whose acquaintance and friendship he was very desirous to cultivate. Mrs. Harrel, too much absorbed in her own affairs to care about any other, saw his entrance with a momentary surprise, and then thought of it no more; but it was not so with Cecilia, whose better understanding led her to deeper reflection.

Even the visits of Mr. Marriot but a few weeks since Mr. Harrel had prohibited, yet he now introduced him into his house with particular distinction; he came back too himself in admirable spirits, enlivened in his countenance, and restored to his good humour. A change so extraordinary, both in conduct and disposition, convinced her that some change no less extraordinary of circumstance must previously have happened: what that might be it was not possible for her to divine, but the lessons she had received from Mr. Monckton led her to suspicions of the darkest kind.

Every part of his behaviour served still further to confirm them; he was civil even to excess to Mr. Marriot; he gave orders aloud not to be at home to Sir Robert Floyer; he made his court to Cecilia with unusual assiduity, and he took every method in his power to procure opportunity to her admirer of addressing and approaching her.

The young man, who seemed *enamoured even to madness*, could scarce refrain not merely from prostration to the object of his passion, but to Mr. Harrel himself for permitting him to see her. Cecilia, who not without some concern perceived a fondness so fruitless, and who knew not by what arts or with what views Mr. Harrel might think proper to encourage it, determined to take all the means that were in her own power towards giving it immediate control. She behaved, therefore, with the utmost reserve, and the moment tea was over, though earnestly entreated to remain with them, she retired to her own

room, without making any other apology than coldly saying she could not stay.

In about an hour Mrs. Harrel ran up stairs to her.

"Oh, Miss Beverley," she cried, "a little respite is now granted me! Mr. Harrel says he shall stay another day; he says, too, one single thousand pounds would now make him a new man."

Cecilia returned no answer; she conjectured some new deceit was in agitation to raise money, and she feared Mr. Marriot was the next dupe to be played upon.

Mrs. Harrel, therefore, with a look of the utmost disappointment, left her, saying she would send for her brother, and once more try if he had yet any remaining regard for her.

Cecilia rested quiet till eleven o'clock, when she was summoned to supper: she found Mr. Marriot still the only guest, and that Mr. Arnott made not his appearance.

She now resolved to publish her resolution of going the next morning to St. James's-square. As soon, therefore, as the servants withdrew, she enquired of Mr. Harrel if he had any commands with Mr. or Mrs. Delvile, as she should see them the next morning, and purposed to spend some time with them.

Mr. Harrel, with a look of much alarm, asked if she meant the whole day.

Many days, she answered, and probably some months.

Mrs. Harrel exclaimed her surprise aloud, and Mr. Harrel looked aghast; while his new young friend cast upon him a glance of reproach and resentment, which fully convinced Cecilia he imagined he had procured himself a title to an easiness of intercourse and frequency of meeting which this intelligence destroyed.

Cecilia, thinking, after all that had passed, no other ceremony on her part was necessary but that of simply speaking her intention, then arose and returned to her own room.

She acquainted her maid that she was going to make a visit to Mrs. Delvile, and gave her directions about packing up her clothes, and sending for a man in the morning to take care of her books.

This employment was soon interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Harrel, who, desiring to speak with her alone, when

the maid was gone, said "O, Miss Beverley, can you indeed be so barbarous as to leave me?"

"I entreat you, Mrs. Harrel," answered Cecilia, "to save both yourself and me any further discussions. I have delayed this removal very long, and I can now delay it no longer."

Mrs. Harrel then flung herself upon a chair in the bitterest sorrow, declaring she was utterly undone; that Mr. Harrel had declared he could not stay even an hour in England if she was not in his house; that he had already had a violent quarrel with Mr. Marriot upon the subject; and that her brother, though she had sent him the most earnest entreaties, would not come near her.

Cecilia, tired of vain attempts to offer comfort, now urged the warmest expostulations against her opposition, strongly representing the real necessity of her going abroad, and the unpardonable weakness of wishing to continue such a life as she now led, adding debt to debt, and hoarding distress upon distress.

Mrs. Harrel then, though rather from compulsion than conviction, declared she would agree to go, if she had not a dread of ill usage; but Mr. Harrel, she said, had behaved to her with the utmost brutality, calling her the cause of his ruin, and threatening that if she procured not this thousand pounds before the ensuing evening, she should be treated as she deserved for her extravagance and folly.

"Does he think, then," said Cecilia with the utmost indignation, "that I am to be frightened through your fears into what compliances he pleases?"

"O no," cried Mrs. Harrel, "no; his expectations are all from my brother. He surely thought that when I supplicated and pleaded to him, he would do what I wished, for so he always did formerly, and so once again I am sure he will do now, could I but make him come to me, and tell him how I am used, and tell him that if Mr. Harrel takes me abroad in this humour, I verily think in his rage he will half murder me."

Cecilia, who well knew she was herself the real cause of Mr. Arnott's resistance, now felt her resolution waver, internally reproaching herself with the sufferings of his sister; alarmed, however, for her own constancy, she earnestly be-

sought Mrs. Harrel to go and compose herself for the night, and promised to deliberate what could be done for her before morning.

Mrs. Harrel complied; but scarce was her own rest more broken than that of Cecilia, who, though extremely fatigued with a whole night's watching, was so perturbed in her mind she could not close her eyes. Mrs. Harrel was her earliest, and had once been her dearest friend; she had deprived her by her own advice of her customary refuge in her brother; to refuse, therefore, assistance, to her seemed cruelty, though to deny it to Mr. Harrel was justice; she endeavoured, therefore, to make a compromise between her judgment and compassion, by resolving that though she would grant nothing further to Mr. Harrel while he remained in London, she would contribute from time to time both to his necessities and comfort, when once he was established elsewhere upon some plan of prudence and economy.

CHAPTER V.

A PERSECUTION.

THE next morning by five o'clock Mrs. Harrel came into Cecilia's room to know the result of her deliberation; and Cecilia, with that graceful readiness which accompanied all her kind offices, instantly assured her the thousand pounds should be her own, if she would consent to seek some quiet retreat, and receive it in small sums, of fifty or one hundred pounds at a time, which should be carefully transmitted, and which, by being delivered to herself, might secure better treatment from Mr. Harrel, and be a motive to revive his care and affection.

She flew, much delighted, with this proposal to her husband; but presently, and with a dejected look, returning, said Mr. Harrel protested he could not possibly set out without first receiving the money. "I shall go myself, therefore," said she, "to my brother after breakfast, for he will not, I see, unkind as he is grown, come to me; and if

I do not succeed with him, I believe I shall never come back!"

To this Cecilia, offended and disappointed, answered "I am sorry for Mr. Arnott, but for myself I have done!"

Mrs. Harrel then left her, and she arose to make immediate preparations for her removal to St. James's-square, whither, with all the speed in her power, she sent her books, her trunks, and all that belonged to her.

When she was summoned down stairs, she found, for the first time, Mr. Harrel breakfasting at the same table with his wife: they seemed mutually out of humour and comfortless; nothing hardly was spoken, and little was swallowed: Mr. Harrel, however, was civil, but his wife was totally silent, and Cecilia the whole time was planning how to take her leave.

When the tea things were removed, Mr. Harrel said "You have not, I hope, Miss Beverley, quite determined upon this strange scheme?"

"Indeed I have, sir," she answered, "and already I have sent my clothes."

At this information he seemed thunderstruck; but, after somewhat recovering, said, with much bitterness, "Well, madam, at least may I request you will stay here till the evening?"

"No, sir," answered she coolly, "I am going instantly."

"And will you not," said he, with yet greater asperity, "amuse yourself first with seeing bailiffs take possession of my house, and your friend Priscilla follow me to jail?"

"Good God, Mr. Harrel!" exclaimed Cecilia, with uplifted hands, "is this a question, is this behaviour I have merited?"

"O no!" cried he with quickness, "should I once think that way——" then rising and striking his forehead, he walked about the room.

Mrs. Harrel arose too, and weeping violently went away.

"Will you at least," said Cecilia, when she was gone "till your affairs are settled, leave Priscilla with me? When I go into my own house, she shall accompany me, and, meantime, Mr. Arnott's, I am sure, will gladly be open to her."

"No, no," answered he, "she deserves no such indul-

gence; she has not any reason to complain; she has been as negligent, as profuse, as expensive as myself; she has practised neither economy nor self-denial, she has neither thought of me nor my affairs, nor is she now afflicted at anything but the loss of that affluence she has done her best towards diminishing."

"All recrimination," said Cecilia, "were vain, or what might not Mrs. Harrel urge in return! but let us not enlarge upon so ungrateful a subject, the wisest and the happiest scheme now were mutually and kindly to console each other."

"Consolation and kindness," cried he with abruptness, "are out of the question. I have ordered a post chaise to be here at night, and if till then you will stay, I will promise to release you without further petition: if not, eternal destruction be my portion if I *live* to see the scene which your removal will occasion!"

"My removal!" cried Cecilia, shuddering, "good heaven, and how can my removal be of such dreadful consequence?"

"Ask me not," cried he, fiercely, "questions or reasons now; the crisis is at hand, and you will soon, happen what may, know all: meantime, what I have said is a fact, and immutable: and you must hasten my end, or give me a chance for avoiding it, as you think fit. I scarce care at this instant which way you decide: remember, however, all I ask of you is to defer your departure; what else I have to hope is from Mr. Arnott."

He then left the room.

Cecilia now was again a coward! In vain she called to her support the advice, the prophecies, the cautions of Mr. Monckton, in vain she recollected the impositions she had already seen practised, for neither the warnings of her counsellor, nor the lessons of her own experience, were proofs against the terrors which threats so desperate inspired: and though more than once she determined to fly at all events from a tyranny he had so little right to usurp, the mere remembrance of the words *if you stay not till night I will not live*, robbed her of all courage; and however long she had prepared herself for this very attack, when the moment arrived, its power over her mind was too strong for resistance.

Whilst this conflict between fear and resolution was still undecided, her servant brought her the following letter from Mr. Arnott.

To Miss Beverley, Portman-square.

Madam, June 13th, 1779.

Determined to obey those commands which you had the goodness to honour me with, I have absented myself from town till Mr. Harrel is settled; for though I am as sensible of your wisdom as of your beauty, I find myself too weak to bear the distress of my unhappy sister, and therefore I run from the sight, nor shall any letter or message follow me, unless it comes from Miss Beverley herself, lest she should in future refuse the only favour I dare presume to solicit, that of sometimes deigning to honour with her directions

The most humble
and devoted of her servants,
J. Arnott.

In the midst of her apprehensions for herself and her own interest, Cecilia could not forbear rejoicing that Mr. Arnott, at least, had escaped the present storm: yet she was certain it would fall the more heavily upon herself, and dreaded the sight of Mrs. Harrel after the shock which this flight would occasion.

Her expectations were but too quickly fulfilled: Mrs. Harrel in a short time after rushed wildly into the room, calling out "My brother is gone! he has left me for ever! Oh save me, Miss Beverley, save me from abuse and insult!" And she wept with so much violence she could utter nothing more.

Cecilia, quite tortured by this persecution, faintly asked what she could do for her?

"Send," cried she, "to my brother, and beseech him not to abandon me! send to him and conjure him to advance this thousand pounds!—the chaise is already ordered, —Mr. Harrel is fixed upon going,—yet he says without that money we must both starve in a strange land.—O send to my cruel brother! he has left word that nothing must follow him that does not come from you."

"For the world, then," cried Cecilia, "would I not baffle his discretion! indeed you must submit to your fate, indeed Mrs. Harrel you must endeavour to bear it better."

Mrs. Harrel, shedding a flood of tears, declared she would try to follow her advice, but again besought her in the utmost agony to send after her brother, protesting she did not think even her life would be safe in making so long a journey with Mr. Harrel in his present state of mind: his character, she said, was totally changed, his gaiety, good humour and sprightliness were turned into roughness and moroseness, and, since his great losses at play, he was grown so fierce and furious, that to oppose him even in a trifle, rendered him quite outrageous in passion.

Cecilia, though truly concerned, and almost melted, yet refused to interfere with Mr. Arnott, and even thought it but justice to acknowledge she had advised his retreat.

"And can you have been so cruel?" cried Mrs. Harrel, with still encreasing violence of sorrow, "to rob me of my only friend, to deprive me of my brother's affection, at the very time I am forced out of the kingdom, with a husband who is ready to murder me, and who says he hates the sight of me, and all because I cannot get him this fatal, fatal money!—O, Miss Beverley, how could I have thought to have had such an office from you?"

Cecilia was beginning a justification, when a message came from Mr. Harrel, desiring to see his wife immediately.

Mrs. Harrel, in great terror, cast herself at Cecilia's feet, and clinging to her knees, called out "I dare not go to him! I dare not go to him! he wants to know my success, and when he hears my brother is run away, I am sure he will kill me!—Oh, Miss Beverley, how could you send him away? how could you be so inhuman as to leave me to the rage of Mr. Harrel?"

Cecilia, distressed and trembling herself, conjured her to rise and be consoled; but Mrs. Harrel, weak and frightened, could only weep and supplicate: "I don't ask you," she cried, "to give the money yourself, but only to send for my brother, that he may protect me, and beg Mr. Harrel

not to treat me so cruelly,—consider but what a long, long journey I am going to make! consider how often you used to say you would love me for ever! consider you have robbed me of the tenderest brother in the world!—Oh, Miss Beverley, send for him back, or be a sister to me yourself, and let not your poor Priscilla leave her native land without help or pity!"

Cecilia, wholly overcome, now knelt too, and embracing her with tears, said, "Oh, Priscilla, plead and reproach no more! what you wish shall be yours,—I will send for your brother,—I will do what you please!"

"Now you are my friend indeed!" cried Mrs. Harrel, "let me but *see* my brother, and his heart will yield to my distress, and he will soften Mr. Harrel by giving his unhappy sister this parting bounty."

Cecilia then took a pen in her hand to write to Mr. Arnott; but struck almost in the same moment with a notion of treachery, in calling him from a retreat which her own counsel had made him seek, professedly to expose him to a supplication which from his present situation might lead him to ruin, she hastily flung it from her, and exclaimed, "No, excellent Mr. Arnott, I will not so unworthily betray you!"

"And can you, Miss Beverley, can you at last," cried Mrs. Harrel, "be so barbarous as to retract?"

"No, my poor Priscilla," answered Cecilia, "I cannot so cruelly disappoint you; my pity shall however make no sufferer but myself,—I cannot send for Mr. Arnott,—from me you must have the money, and may it answer the purpose for which it is given, and restore to you the tenderness of your husband, and the peace of your own heart!"

Priscilla, scarce waiting to thank her, flew with this intelligence to Mr. Harrel; who, with the same impetuosity, scarce waiting to say he was glad of it, ran himself to bring the Jew from whom the money was to be procured. Every thing was soon settled, Cecilia had no time for retracting, and repentance they had not the delicacy to regard: again, therefore, she signed her name for paying the principal and interest of another £1,000 within ten days after she was of age: and, having taken the money, she accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Harrel into another room. Presenting it

then with an affecting solemnity to Mrs. Harrel, "accept, Priscilla," she cried, "this irrefragable mark of the sincerity of my friendship; but suffer me at the same time to tell you, it is the last to so considerable an amount I ever mean to offer: receive it, therefore, with kindness, but use it with discretion."

She then embraced her, and eager now to avoid acknowledgment, as before she had been to escape importunities, she left them together.

The soothing recompense of succouring benevolence, followed not this gift, nor made amends for this loss: perplexity and uneasiness, regret and resentment, accompanied the donation, and rested upon her mind; she feared she had done wrong; she was certain Mr. Monckton would blame her; he knew not the persecution she suffered, nor would he make any allowance for the threats which alarmed, or the entreaties which melted her.

Far other had been her feelings at the generosity she exerted for the Hills; no doubts then tormented her, and no repentance embittered her beneficence. Their worth was without suspicion, and their misfortunes were not of their own seeking; the post in which they had been stationed they had never deserted, and the poverty into which they had sunk was accidental and unavoidable.

But here, every evil had been wantonly incurred by vanity and licentiousness, and shamelessly followed by injustice and fraud: the disturbance of her mind only increased by reflection, for when the rights of the creditors with their injuries occurred to her, she enquired of herself by what title or equity, she had so liberally assisted Mr. Harrel in eluding their claims, and flying the punishment which the law would inflict.

Startled by this consideration, she most severely reproached herself for a compliance of which she had so lightly weighed the consequences, and thought with the utmost dismay, that while she had flattered herself she was merely indulging the dictates of humanity, she might perhaps be accused by the world as an abettor of guile and injustice.

"And yet," she continued, "whom can I essentially have injured but myself? would his creditors have been

benefited by my refusal? had I braved the execution of his dreadful threat, and quitted his house before I was wrought upon to assist him, would his suicide have lessened their losses, or secured their demands? even if he had no intention but to intimidate me, who will be wronged by my enabling him to go abroad, or who would be better paid were he seized and confined? All that remains of his shattered fortune may still be claimed, though I have saved him from a lingering imprisonment, desperate for himself and his wife, and useless for those he has plundered."

And thus, now soothed by the purity of her intentions, and now uneasy from the rectitude of her principles, she alternately rejoiced and repined at what she had done.

At dinner Mr. Harrel was all civility and good humour. He warmly thanked Cecilia for the kindness she had shown him, and gaily added, "You should be absolved from all the mischief you may do for a twelvemonth to come, in reward for the preservation from mischief which you have this day effected."

"The preservation," said Cecilia, "will I hope be for many days. But tell me, sir, exactly, at what time I may acquaint Mrs. Delvile I shall wait upon her?"

"Perhaps," he answered, "by eight o'clock; perhaps by nine; you will not mind half an hour?"

"Certainly not;" she answered, unwilling by disputing about a trifle to diminish his satisfaction in her assistance. She wrote, therefore, another note to Mrs. Delvile, desiring she would not expect her till near ten o'clock, and promising to account and apologize for these seeming caprices when she had the honour of seeing her.

The rest of the afternoon she spent wholly in exhorting Mrs. Harrel to show more fortitude, and conjuring her to study nothing while abroad but economy, prudence and housewifry: a lesson how hard for the thoughtless and negligent Priscilla! she heard the advice with repugnance, and only answered it with helpless complaints that she knew not how to spend less money than she had always done.

After tea, Mr. Harrel, still in high spirits, went out, entreating Cecilia to stay with Priscilla till his return, which he promised should be early.

Nine o'clock, however, came, and he did not appear; Cecilia then grew anxious to keep her appointment with Mrs. Delvile; but ten o'clock also came, and still Mr. Harrel was absent.

She then determined to wait no longer, and rang the bell for her servant and chair: but when Mrs. Harrel desired to be informed the moment that Mr. Harrel returned, the man said he had been come home more than half an hour.

Much surprised, she enquired where he was.

"In his own room, madam, and gave orders not to be disturbed."

Cecilia, who was not much pleased at this account, was easily persuaded to stay a few minutes longer; and, fearing some new evil, she was going to send him a message, by way of knowing how he was employed, when he came himself into the room.

"Well, ladies," he cried, in a hurrying manner, "who is for Vauxhall?"

"Vauxhall!" repeated Mrs. Harrel, while Cecilia, staring, perceived in his face a look of perturbation that extremely alarmed her.

"Come, come," he cried, "we have no time to lose. A hackney coach will serve us; we won't wait for our own."

"Have you then given up going abroad?" said Mrs. Harrel.

"No, no; where can we go from half so well? Let us live while we live! I have ordered a chaise to be in waiting there. Come, let's be gone."

"First," said Cecilia, "let me wish you both good night."

"Will you not go with me?" cried Mrs. Harrel; "how can I go to Vauxhall alone?"

"You are not alone," answered she; "but if I go, how am I to return?"

"She shall return with you," cried Mr. Harrel, "if you desire it; you shall return together."

Mrs. Harrel, starting up in rapture, called out, "Oh Mr. Harrel, will you indeed leave me in England?"

"Yes," answered he, reproachfully, "if you will make a better friend than you have made a wife, and if Miss Beverley is content to take charge of you."

"What can all this mean?" exclaimed Cecilia; "is it possible you can be serious? Are you really going yourself, and will you suffer Mrs. Harrel to remain?"

"I am," he answered, "and I will."

Then ringing the bell, he ordered a hackney coach.

Mrs. Harrel was scarce able to breathe for ecstasy, nor Cecilia for amazement; while Mr. Harrel, attending to neither of them, walked for some time silently about the room.

"But how," cried Cecilia, at last, "can I possibly go? Mrs. Delvile must already be astonished at my delay; and if I disappoint her again, she will hardly receive me."

"O, make not any difficulties," cried Mrs. Harrel in an agony; "if Mr. Harrel will let me stay, sure you will not be so cruel as to oppose him?"

"But, why," said Cecilia, "should either of us go to Vauxhall? surely that is no place for a parting so melancholy."

A servant then came in, and said the hackney coach was at the door.

Mr. Harrel, starting at the sound, called out, "Come, what do we wait for? If we go not immediately, we may be prevented."

Cecilia then again wished them good night, protesting she could fail Mrs. Delvile no longer.

Mrs. Harrel, half wild at this refusal, conjured her in the most frantic manner to give way, exclaiming, "Oh, cruel! cruel! to deny me this last request! I will kneel to you day and night," sinking upon the ground before her, "and I will serve you as the humblest of your slaves, if you will but be kind in this last instance, and save me from banishment and misery!"

"Oh, rise, Mrs. Harrel," cried Cecilia, ashamed of her prostration, and shocked by her vehemence, "rise and let me rest!—it is painful to me to refuse, but to comply for ever, in defiance of my judgment—Oh, Mrs. Harrel, I know no longer what is kind or what is cruel, nor have I known for some time past right from wrong, nor good from evil!"

"Come," cried Mr. Harrel, impetuously, "I wait not another minute!"

"Leave her then with me!" said Cecilia, "I will per-

form my promise, Mr. Arnott will I am sure hold his to be sacred; she shall now go with him, she shall hereafter come to me,—leave her but behind, and depend upon our care."

"No, no," cried he, with quickness, "I must take care of her myself. I shall not carry her abroad with me; but the only legacy I can leave her, is a warning which I hope she will remember for ever. *You*, however, need not go."

"What," cried Mrs. Harrel, "leave me at Vauxhall, and yet leave me alone?"

"What of that?" cried he with fierceness; "do you not desire to be left? Have you any regard for me, or for any thing upon earth but yourself? Cease these vain clamours, and come, I insist upon it, this moment."

And then, with a violent oath, he declared he would be detained no longer, and approached in great rage to seize her. Mrs. Harrel shrieked aloud; and the terrified Cecilia exclaimed, "If indeed you are to part to-night, part not thus dreadfully!—rise, Mrs. Harrel, and comply!—be reconciled, be kind to her, Mr. Harrel!—and I will go with her myself,—we will all go together!"

"And why," cried Mr. Harrel, more gently, yet with the utmost emotion, "why should *you* go!—*you* want no warning! *you* need no terror!—better far had you fly us, and my wife, when I am set out, may find you."

Mrs. Harrel, however, suffered her not to recede; and Cecilia, though half distracted by the scenes of horror and perplexity in which she was perpetually engaged, ordered her servant to acquaint Mrs. Delvile she was again compelled to defer waiting upon her.

Mr. Harrel then hurried them both into the coach, which he directed to Vauxhall.

"Pray write to me when you are landed," said Mrs. Harrel, who now released from her personal apprehensions, began to feel some for her husband.

He made not any answer. She then asked to what part of France he meant to go; but still he did not reply: and when she urged him by a third question, he told her in a rage to torment him no more.

During the rest of the ride, not another word was said. Mrs. Harrel wept; her husband guarded a gloomy silence;

and Cecilia most unpleasantly passed her time between anxious suspicions of some new scheme, and a terrified wonder in what all these transactions would terminate.

CHAPTER VI.

A MAN OF BUSINESS.

WHEN they entered Vauxhall,[1] Mr. Harrel endeavoured to dismiss his moroseness, and affecting his usual gaiety, struggled to recover his spirits: but the effort was vain, he could neither talk nor look like himself: and though from time to time he resumed his air of wonted levity, he could not support it, but drooped and hung his head in evident despondency.

He made them take several turns in the midst of the company, and walked so fast, that they could hardly keep pace with him, as if he hoped by exercise to restore his vivacity; but every attempt failed, he sunk and grew sadder, and muttering between his teeth "this is not to be borne!" he hastily called to a waiter to bring him a bottle of champagne.

Of this he drank glass after glass, notwithstanding Cecilia, as Mrs. Harrel had not courage to speak, entreated him to forbear. He seemed, however, not to hear her; but when he had drunk what he thought necessary to revive him, he conveyed them into an unfrequented part of the garden, and as soon as they were out of sight of all but a few stragglers,

[1] Vauxhall, Faukeshall, or Foxhall, properly Fulke's Hall, a manor in Surrey, so called from Fulke de Breauté, a mercenary follower of King John. The Gardens were formed about 1661, and known at first as "New Spring Gardens."—"24 May, 1714. We went by water to Fox Hall, and the Spring Garden. I was surprised with so many pleasant walks, &c., so near London."—*Thoresby's Diary.*

"The coaches being come to the water-side, they all alighted, and getting into one boat, proceeded to Vauxhall. The extreme beauty and elegance of this place is well known to every one of my readers; and happy is it for me that it is so; since to give an adequate idea of it would exceed my power of description."—FIELDING, *Amelia.* (*From Peter Cunningham's Handbook for London.*)

he suddenly stopt, and, in great agitation, said, "My chaise will soon be ready, and I shall take of you a long farewell! —All my affairs are unpropitious to my speedy return;—the wine is now mounting into my head, and perhaps I may not be able to say much by and by. I fear I have been cruel to you, Priscilla, and I begin to wish I had spared you this parting scene; yet let it not be banished your remembrance, but think of it when you are tempted to such mad folly as has ruined us."

Mrs. Harrel wept too much to make any answer; and turning from her to Cecilia, "Oh, madam," he cried, "to *you*, indeed, I dare not speak! I have used you most unworthily, but I pay for it all! I ask you not to pity or forgive me, I know it is impossible you should do either."

"No," cried the softened Cecilia, "it is not impossible, I do both at this moment, and I hope—"

"Do not hope," interrupted he; "be not so angelic, for I cannot bear it! Benevolence like yours should have fallen into worthier hands. But come, let us return to the company. My head grows giddy, but my heart is still heavy; I must make them more fit companions for each other."

He would then have hurried them back; but Cecilia, endeavouring to stop him, said, "You do not mean, I hope, to call for more wine?"

"Why not?" cried he, with affected spirit; "what, shall we not be merry before we part? Yes, we will all be merry; for if we are not, how shall we part at all?—Oh, not without a struggle!—" Then, stopping, he paused a moment, and casting off the mask of levity, said in accents the most solemn, "I commit this packet to *you*," giving a sealed parcel to Cecilia; "had I written it later, its contents had been kinder to my wife, for now the hour of separation approaches, ill-will and resentment subside. Poor Priscilla! —I am sorry—but you will succour her, I am sure you will.—Oh, had I known you myself before this infatuation —bright pattern of all goodness!—But I was devoted,—a ruined wretch before ever you entered my house; unworthy to be saved, unworthy that virtues such as yours should dwell under the same roof with me! But come,—come now, or my resolution will waver, and I shall not go at last."

"But what is this packet?" cried Cecilia, "and why do you give it to me?"

"No matter, no matter, you will know by and by;—the chaise waits, and I must gather courage to be gone."

He then pressed forward, answering neither to remonstrance nor intreaty from his frightened companions.

The moment they returned to the covered walk, they were met by Mr. Marriot. Mr. Harrel, starting, endeavoured to pass him; but when he approached and said, "You have sent, sir, no answer to my letter!" he stopt, and in a tone of forced politeness, said, "No, sir, but I shall answer it to-morrow, and to-night I hope you will do me the honour of supping with me."

Mr. Marriot, looking openly at Cecilia as his inducement, though evidently regarding himself as an injured man, hesitated a moment, yet accepted the invitation.

"To supper!" cried Mrs. Harrel, "what here?"

"To supper!" repeated Cecilia, "and how are we to get home?"

"Think not of that these two hours," answered he, "come, let us look for a box."

Cecilia then grew quite urgent with him to give up a scheme which must keep them so late; and Mrs. Harrel repeatedly exclaimed, "Indeed people will think it very odd to see us here without any party!" But he heeded them not; and perceiving at some distance Mr. Morrice, he called out to him to find them a box; for the evening was very pleasant, and the gardens were so much crowded, that no accommodation was unseized.

"Sir," cried Morrice, with his usual readiness, "I'll get you one if I turn out ten old aldermen sucking custards."

Just after he was gone, a fat, sleek, vulgar-looking man, dressed in a bright purple coat, with a deep red waistcoat, and a wig bulging far from his head with small round curls, while his plump face and person announced plenty and good living, and an air of defiance spoke the fulness of his purse, strutted boldly up to Mr. Harrel, and accosting him in a manner that showed some diffidence of his reception, but none of his right, said, "Sir, your humble servant;" and made a bow first to him, and then to the ladies.

"Sir, yours," replied Mr. Harrel, scornfully, and without touching his hat he walked quick on.

His fat acquaintance, who seemed but little disposed to be offended with impunity, instantly replaced his hat on his head, and with a look that implied *I'll fit you for this!* put his hands to his sides, and following him, said, "Sir, I must make bold to beg the favour of exchanging a few words with you."

"Ay, sir," answered Mr. Harrel, "come to me to-morrow, and you shall exchange as many as you please."

"Nothing like the time present, sir," answered the man; "as for to-morrow, I believe it intends to come no more; for I have heard of it any time these three years. I mean no reflections, sir, but let every man have his right. That's what I say, and that's my notion of things."

Mr. Harrel, with a violent execration, asked what he meant by dunning him at such a place as Vauxhall?

"One place, sir," he replied, "is as good as another place; for so as what one does is good, 'tis no matter for where it may be. A *man of business* never wants a counter, if he can meet with a joint-stool. For my part, I'm all for a clear conscience, and no bills without receipts to them."

"And if you were all for broken bones," cried Mr. Harrel, angrily, "I would oblige you with them without delay."

"Sir," cried the man, equally provoked, "this is talking quite out of character; for as to broken bones, there's ne'er a person in all England, gentle nor simple, can say he's a right to break mine, for I'm not a person of that sort, but a man of as good property as another man; and there's ne'er a customer I have in the world that's more his own man than myself."

"Lord bless me, Mr. Hobson," cried Mrs. Harrel, "don't follow us in this manner! If we meet any of our acquaintance, they'll think us half crazy."

"Ma'am," answered Mr. Hobson, again taking off his hat, "if I'm treated with proper respect, no man will behave more generous than myself; but if I'm affronted, all I can say is, it may go harder with some folks than they think for."

Here a little mean-looking man, very thin, and almost bent double with perpetual cringing, came up to Mr. Hobson,

and pulling him by the sleeve, whispered, yet loud enough to be heard, "It's surpriseable to me, Mr. Hobson, you can behave so out of the way! For my part perhaps I've as much my due as another person, but I dares to say I shall have it when it's convenient, and I'd scorn for to mislest a gentleman when he's taking his pleasure."

"Lord bless me," cried Mrs. Harrel, "what shall we do now? here's all Mr. Harrel's creditors coming upon us!"

"Do?" cried Mr. Harrel, re-assuming an air of gaiety, "why give them all a supper, to be sure. Come, gentlemen, will you favour me with your company to supper?"

"Sir," answered Mr. Hobson, somewhat softened by this unexpected invitation, "I've supped this hour and more, and had my glass too, for I'm as willing to spend my money as another man; only what I say is this, I don't choose to be cheated, for that's losing one's substance, and getting no credit; however, as to drinking another glass, or such a matter as that, I'll do it with all the pleasure in life."

"And as to me," said the other man, whose name was Simkins, and whose head almost touched the ground by the profoundness of his reverence, "I can't upon no account think of taking the liberty; but if I may just stand without, I'll make bold to go so far as just for to drink my humble duty to the ladies in a cup of cyder."

"Are you mad, Mr. Harrel, are you mad!" cried his wife, "to think of asking such people as these to supper? What will every body say? Suppose any of our acquaintance should see us? I am sure I shall die with shame."

"Mad!" repeated he; "no, not mad, but merry. O ho, Mr. Morrice, why have you been so long? what have you done for us?"

"Why, sir," answered Morrice, returning with a look somewhat less elated than he had set out, "the gardens are so full, there is not a box to be had: but I hope we shall get one for all that; for I observed one of the best boxes in the garden, just to the right there, with nobody in it but that gentleman who made me spill the tea-pot at the Pantheon. So I made an apology, and told him the case: but he only said *humph?* and *hay?* so then I told it all over again, but he served me just the same, for he never

seems to hear what one says till one's just done, and then he begins to recollect one's speaking to him; however, though I repeated it all over and over again, I could get nothing from him but just that *humph?* and *hay?* but he is so remarkably absent, that I dare say if we all go and sit down round him, he won't know a word of the matter."

"Won't he?" cried Mr. Harrel, "have at him, then!"

And he followed Mr. Morrice, though Cecilia, who now half suspected that all was to end in a mere idle frolic, warmly joined her remonstrances to those of Mrs. Harrel, which were made with the utmost, but with fruitless earnestness.

Mr. Meadows, who was seated in the middle of the box, was lolloping upon the table with his customary ease, and picking his teeth with his usual inattention to all about him. The intrusion, however, of so large a party, seemed to threaten his insensibility with unavoidable disturbance; though, imagining they meant but to look in at the box, and pass on, he made not at their first approach any alteration in his attitude or employment.

"See, ladies," cried the officious Morrice, "I told you there was room; and I am sure this gentleman will be very happy to make way for you, if it's only out of good nature to the waiters, as he is neither eating nor drinking, nor doing any thing at all. So if you two ladies will go in at that side, Mr. Harrel and that other gentleman," pointing to Mr. Marriot, "may go to the other, and then I'll sit by the ladies here, and those other two gentlemen——"

Here Mr. Meadows, raising himself from his reclining posture, and staring Morrice in the face, gravely said, "What's all this, sir?"

Morrice, who expected to have arranged the whole party without a question, and who understood so little of modish airs as to suspect neither affectation nor trick in the absence of mind and indolence of manners which he observed in Mr. Meadows, was utterly amazed by this interrogatory, and staring himself in return, said, "Sir, you seemed so thoughtful—I did not think—I did not suppose you would have taken any notice of just a person or two coming into the box."

"Did not you, sir?" said Mr. Meadows, very coldly;

"why then, now you do, perhaps you'll be so obliging as to let me have my own box to myself."

And then again he returned to his favourite position.

"Certainly, sir," said Morrice, bowing; "I am sure I did not mean to disturb you: for you seemed so lost in thought, that I'm sure I did not much believe you would have seen us."

"Why, sir," said Mr. Hobson, strutting forward, "if I may speak my opinion, I should think, as you happen to be quite alone, a little agreeable company would be no such bad thing. At least that's my notion."

"And if I might take the liberty," said the smooth-tongued Mr. Simkins, "for to put in a word, I should think the best way would be, if the gentleman has no particklar objection, for me just to stand somewhere hereabouts, and so, when he's had what he's a mind to, be ready for to pop in at one side, as he comes out at the t'other; for if one does not look pretty 'cute such a full night as this, a box is whipt away before one knows where one is."

"No, no, no," cried Mrs. Harrel, impatiently; "let us neither sup in this box nor in any other; let us go away entirely."

"Indeed we must! indeed we ought!" cried Cecilia; "it is utterly improper we should stay; pray let us be gone immediately."

Mr. Harrel paid not the least regard to these requests; but Mr. Meadows, who could no longer seem unconscious of what passed, did himself so much violence as to arise, and ask if the ladies would be seated.

"I said so!" cried Morrice, triumphantly; "I was sure there was no gentleman but would be happy to accommodate two such ladies!"

The ladies, however, far from happy in being so accommodated, again tried their utmost influence in persuading Mr. Harrel to give up this scheme, but he would not hear them; he insisted upon their going into the box, and, extending the privilege which Mr. Meadows had given, he invited without ceremony the whole party to follow.

Mr. Meadows, though he seemed to think this a very extraordinary encroachment, had already made such an effort from his general langnor, in the repulse he had given to

Morrice, that he could exert himself no further; but after looking around him with mingled vacancy and contempt, he again seated himself, and suffered Morrice to do the honours without more opposition.

Morrice, but too happy in the office, placed Cecilia next to Mr. Meadows, and would have made Mr. Marriot her other neighbour, but she insisted upon not being parted from Mrs. Harrel; and therefore, as he chose to sit also by that lady himself, Mr. Marriot was obliged to follow Mr. Harrel to the other side of the box. Mr. Hobson, without further invitation, placed himself comfortably in one of the corners; and Mr. Simkins, who stood modestly for some time in another, finding the further encouragement for which he waited was not likely to arrive, dropt quietly into his seat without it.

Supper was now ordered, and while it was preparing, Mr. Harrel sat totally silent; but Mr. Meadows thought proper to force himself to talk with Cecilia, though she could well have dispensed with such an exertion of his politeness.

"Do you like this place, ma'am?"

"Indeed, I hardly know,—I never was here before."

"No wonder! the only surprise is that anybody can come to it at all. To see a set of people walking after nothing! strolling about without view or object! 'tis strange! don't you think so, ma'am?"

"Yes,—I believe so," said Cecilia, scarce hearing him.

"O, it gives me the vapours, the horrors," cried he, "to see what poor creatures we all are! taking pleasure even from the privation of it! forcing ourselves into exercise and toil, when we might at least have the indulgence of sitting still and reposing!"

"Lord, sir," cried Morrice, "don't you like walking?"

"Walking!" cried he; "I know nothing so humiliating: to see a rational being in such mechanical motion! with no knowledge upon what principles he proceeds, but plodding on, one foot before another, without even any consciousness which is first, or how either—"

"Sir," interrupted Mr. Hobson, "I hope you won't take it amiss if I make bold to tell my opinion; for my way is this, let every man speak his maxim! But what I say as

to this matter, is this, if a man must always be stopping to consider what foot he is standing upon, he had need have little to do, being the right does as well as the left, and the left as well as the right. And that, sir, I think is a fair argument."

Mr. Meadows deigned no other answer to this speech than a look of contempt.

"I fancy, sir," said Morrice, "you are fond of riding, for all your good horsemen like nothing else."

"Riding!" exclaimed Mr. Meadows; "oh, barbarous! Wrestling and boxing are polite arts to it! Trusting to the discretion of an animal less intellectual than ourselves! a sudden spring may break all our limbs, a stumble may fracture our sculls! And what is the inducement? to get melted with heat, killed with fatigue, and covered with dust! miserable infatuation!—Do you love riding, ma'am?"

"Yes, very well, sir."

"I am glad to hear it," cried he, with a vacant smile; "you are quite right; I am entirely of your opinion."

Mr. Simkins now, with a look of much perplexity, yet rising and bowing, said "I don't mean, sir, to be so rude as to put in my oar, but if I did not take you wrong, I'm sure, just now, I thought you seemed for to make no great 'count of riding, and yet now, all of the sudden, one would think you was a speaking up for it!"

"Why, sir," cried Morrice, "if you neither like riding nor walking, you can have no pleasure at all but only in sitting."

"Sitting!" repeated Mr. Meadows, with a yawn, "O, worse and worse! it dispirits me to death! it robs me of all fire and life! it weakens circulation, and destroys elasticity."

"Pray then, sir," said Morrice, "do you like any better to stand?"

"To stand? O, intolerable! the most unmeaning thing in the world! one had better be made a mummy!"

"Why then, pray, sir," said Mr. Hobson, "let me ask the favour of you to tell us what it is you *do* like?"

Mr. Meadows, though he stared him full in the face, began picking his teeth without making any answer.

"You see, Mr. Hobson," said Mr. Simkins, "the gentle-

man has no mind for to tell you, but if I may take the liberty just to put in, I think if he neither likes walking, nor riding, nor sitting, nor standing, I take it he likes nothing."

"Well, sir," said Morrice, "but here comes supper, and I hope you will like that. Pray, sir, may I help you to a bit of this ham?"

Mr. Meadows, not seeming to hear him, suddenly, and with an air of extreme weariness, arose, and without speaking to anybody, abruptly made his way out of the box.

Mr. Harrel, now, starting from the gloomy reverie into which he had sunk, undertook to do the honours of the table, insisting with much violence upon helping everybody, calling for more provisions, and struggling to appear in high spirits and good humour.

In a few minutes Captain Aresby, who was passing by the box, stopt to make his compliments to Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia.

"What a concourse!" he cried, casting up his eyes with an expression of half-dying fatigue, "are you not *accablé?* for my part I hardly respire. I have really hardly ever had the honour of being so *obsédé* before."

"We can make very good room, sir," said Morrice, "if you choose to come in."

"Yes," said Mr. Simkins, obsequiously standing up, "I am sure the gentleman will be very welcome to take my place, for I did not mean for to sit down, only just to look agreeable."

"By no means, sir," answered the Captain: "I shall be quite *au désespoir* if I derange anybody."

"Sir," said Mr. Hobson, "I don't offer you my place, because I take it for granted if you had a mind to come in, you would not stand upon ceremony; for what I say is, let every man speak his mind, and then we shall all know how to conduct ourselves. That's my way, and let any man tell me a better!"

The Captain, after looking at him with a surprise not wholly unmixt with horror, turned from him without making any answer, and said to Cecilia, "And how long, ma'am, have you tried this petrifying place?"

"An hour,—two hours, I believe," she answered.

"Really? and nobody here! *assez de monde*, but nobody here! a blank *partout!*"

"Sir," said Mr. Simkins, getting out of the box that he might bow with more facility, "I humbly crave pardon for the liberty, but, if I understood right, you said something of a blank? pray, sir, if I may be so free, has there been anything of the nature of a lottery, or a raffle, in the garden? or the like of that?"

"Sir!" said the Captain, regarding him from head to foot, "I am quite *assommé* that I cannot comprehend your allusion."

"Sir, I ask pardon," said the man, bowing still lower, "I only thought if in case it should not be above half a crown, or such a matter as that, I might perhaps stretch a point once in a way."

The Captain, more and more amazed, stared at him again, but not thinking it necessary to take any further notice of him, he enquired of Cecilia if she meant to stay late.

"I hope not," she replied, "I have already stayed later than I wished to do."

"Really!" said he, with an unmeaning smile: "Well, that is as horrid a thing as I have the *malheur* to know. For my part, I make it a principle not to stay long in these semi-barbarous places, for after a certain time they bore me to that degree I am quite *abimé*. I shall, however, do *mon possible* to have the honour of seeing you again."

And then, with a smile of yet greater insipidity, he protested he was *reduced to despair* in leaving her, and walked on.

"Pray, ma'am, if I may be so bold," said Mr. Hobson, "what countryman may that gentleman be?"

"An Englishman, I suppose, sir," said Cecilia.

"An Englishman, ma'am!" said Mr. Hobson, "why I could not understand one word in ten that came out of his mouth."

"Why, indeed," said Mr. Simkins, "he has a mighty peticklar way of speaking, for I'm sure I thought I could have sworn he said something of a blank, or to that amount, but I could make nothing of it when I came to ask him about it."

"Let every man speak to be understood," cried Mr.

Hobson, "that's my notion of things: for as to all those fine words that nobody can make out, I hold them to be of no use. Suppose a man was to talk in that manner when he's doing business, what would be the upshot? who'd understand what he meant? Well, that's the proof; what i'n't fit for business, i'n't of no value: that's my way of judging, and that's what I go upon."

"He said some other things," rejoined Mr. Simkins, "that I could not make out very clear, only I had no mind to ask any more questions, for fear of his answering me something I should not understand: but as well as I could make it out, I thought I heard him say there was nobody here! what he could mean by that, I can't pretend for to guess, for I'm sure the garden is so stock full, that if there was to come many more, I don't know where they could cram 'em."

"I took notice of it at the time," said Mr. Hobson, "for it i'n't many things are lost upon me; and, to tell you the truth, I thought he had been making pretty free with his bottle, by his seeing no better."

"Bottle!" cried Mr. Harrel, "a most excellent hint, Mr. Hobson! come! let us all make free with the bottle!"

He then called for more wine, and insisted that every body should pledge him. Mr. Marriott and Mr. Morrice made not any objection, and Mr. Hobson and Mr. Simkins consented with much delight.

Mr. Harrel now grew extremely unruly, the wine he had already drunk being thus powerfully aided; and his next project was to make his wife and Cecilia follow his example. Cecilia, more incensed than ever to see no preparation made for his departure, and all possible pains taken to unfit him for setting out, refused him with equal firmness and displeasure, and lamented with the bitterest self-reproaches, the consent which had been forced from her to be present at a scene of such disorder: but Mrs. Harrell would have opposed him in vain, had not his attention been called off to another object. This was Sir Robert Floyer, who perceiving the party at some distance, no sooner observed Mr. Marriott in such company, than advancing to the box with an air of rage and defiance, he told Mr. Harrel he had something to say to him.

"Ay," cried Harrel, "say to me? and so have I to say

to you! Come amongst us and be merry! Here, make room, make way! Sit close, my friends!"

Sir Robert, who now saw he was in no situation to be reasoned with, stood for a moment silent; and then, looking round the box, and observing Messrs. Hobson and Simkins, he exclaimed aloud, "Why what queer party have you got into? who the d—l have you picked up here?"[1]

Mr. Hobson, who, to the importance of lately acquired wealth, now added the courage of newly-drunk champagne, stoutly kept his ground, without seeming at all conscious he was included in this interrogation; but Mr. Simkins, who had still his way to make in the world, and whose habitual servility would have resisted a larger draught, was easily intimidated; he again, therefore, stood up, and with the most cringing respect offered the baronet his place: who, taking neither of the offer nor offerer the smallest notice, still stood opposite to Mr. Harrel, waiting for some explanation.

Mr. Harrel, however, who now grew really incapable of giving any, only repeated his invitation, that he would make one among them.

"One among you?" cried he, angrily, and pointing to Mr. Hobson, "why you don't fancy I'll sit down with a bricklayer?"

"A bricklayer?" said Mr. Harrel, "ay, sure, and a hosier too; sit down, Mr. Simkins, keep your place, man!"

Mr. Simkins most thankfully bowed; but Mr. Hobson, who could no longer avoid feeling the personality of this reflection, boldly answered, "Sir, you may sit down with a worse man any day in the week! I have done nothing I'm ashamed of, and no man can say to me why did you so? I don't tell you, sir, what I'm worth; no one has a right to ask. I only say three times five is fifteen! that's all."

"Why, what the d—l, you impudent fellow," cried the haughty baronet, "you don't presume to mutter, do you?"

"Sir," answered Mr. Hobson, very hotly, "I sha'n't put

[1] "Hobson and Simkins are Borough men, and I am confident they were both canvassed last year; they are not representations of life, they are the life itself."—*Mrs. Thrale to Miss Burney*, 1782.—*Diary*, p. 139, vol. ii.

up with abuse from no man! I've got a fair character in the world, and wherewithal to live by my own liking. And what I have is my own, and all I say is, let everyone say the same, for that's the way to fear no man, and face the d—l!"

"What do you mean by that, fellow?" cried Sir Robert.

"Fellow, Sir! this is talking no-how. Do you think a man of substance, that's got above the world, is to be treated like a little scrubby apprentice? Let every man have his own, that's always my way of thinking; and this I can say for myself, I have as good a right to show my head where I please as ever a member of parliament in all England; and I wish everybody here could say as much."

Sir Robert, fury starting into his eyes, was beginning an answer: but Mrs. Harrel with terror, and Cecilia with dignity, calling upon them both to forbear, the baronet desired Morrice to relinquish his place to him, and seating himself next to Mrs. Harrel, gave over the contest.

Meanwhile Mr. Simkins, hoping to ingratiate himself with the company, advanced to Mr. Hobson, already cooled by finding himself unanswered, and reproachfully said, "Mr. Hobson, if I may make so free, I must needs be bold to say I am quite ashamed of you! a person of your standing and credit for to talk so disrespectful! as if a gentleman had not a right to take a little pleasure, because he just happens to owe you a little matters of money: fie, fie, Mr. Hobson! I did not expect you to behave so despiseable!"

"Despiseable!" answered Mr. Hobson, "I'd scorn as much to do anything despiseable as yourself, or anything misbecoming of a gentleman; and as to coming to such a place as this may be, why I have no objection to it. All I stand to is this, let every man have his due; for as to taking a little pleasure, here I am, as one may say, doing the same myself; but where's the harm of that? who's a right to call a man to account that's clear of the world? Not that I mean to boast, nor nothing like it, but as I said before, three times five is fifteen;—that's my calculation."

Mr. Harrel, who, during this debate, had still continued drinking, regardless of all opposition from his wife and Cecilia, now grew more and more turbulent: he insisted that Mr. Simkins should return to his seat, ordered him

another bumper of champagne, and saying he had not half company enough to raise his spirits, desired Morrice to go and invite more.

Morrice, always ready to promote a frolic, most cheerfully consented; but when Cecilia, in a low voice, supplicated him to bring no one back, with still more readiness he made signs that he understood and would obey her.

Mr. Harrel then began to sing, and in so noisy and riotous a manner, that nobody approached the box without stopping to stare at him; and those who were new to such scenes, not contented with merely looking in, stationed themselves at some distance before it, to observe what was passing, and to contemplate with envy and admiration an appearance of mirth and enjoyment which they attributed to happiness and pleasure!

Mrs. Harrel, shocked to be seen in such mixed company, grew every instant more restless and miserable; and Cecilia, half distracted to think how they were to get home, passed all her time in making secret vows that if once again she was delivered from Mr. Harrel she would never see him more.

Sir Robert Floyer perceiving their mutual uneasiness, proposed to escort them home himself; and Cecilia, notwithstanding her aversion to him, was listening to the scheme, when Mr. Marriot, who had been evidently provoked and disconcerted since the junction of the baronet, suspecting what was passing, offered his services also, and in a tone of voice that did not promise a very quiet acquiescence in a refusal.

Cecilia, who too easily, in their looks, saw all the eagerness of rivalry, now dreaded the consequence of her decision, and therefore declined the assistance of either: but her distress was unspeakable, as there was not one person in the party to whose care she could commit herself, though the behaviour of Mr. Harrel, which every moment grew more disorderly, rendered the necessity of quitting him urgent and uncontrollable.

When Morrice returned, stopping in the midst of his loud and violent singing, he vehemently demanded what company he had brought him?

"None at all, sir," answered Morrice, looking signifi-

cantly at Cecilia; "I have really been so unlucky as not to meet with anybody who had a mind to come."

"Why then," answered he, starting up, "I will seek some for myself." "O no, pray, Mr. Harrel, bring nobody else," cried his wife. "Hear us in pity," cried Cecilia, "and distress us no further." "Distress you?" cried he, with quickness, "what, shall I not bring you those pretty girls? Yes, one more glass, and I will teach you to welcome them."

And he poured out another bumper.

"This is insupportable!" cried Cecilia, rising, "and I can remain here no longer."

"This is cruel indeed," cried Mrs. Harrel, bursting into tears; "did you only bring me here to insult me?"

"No!" cried he, suddenly embracing her, "by this parting kiss!" then wildly jumping upon his seat, he leapt over the table, and was out of sight in an instant.

Amazement seized all who remained; Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia, indeed, doubted not but he was actually gone to the chaise he had ordered; but the manner of his departure affrighted them, and his preceding behaviour had made them cease to expect it: Mrs. Harrel, leaning upon Cecilia, continued to weep, while she, confounded and alarmed, scarce knew whether she should stay and console her, or fly after Mr. Harrel, whom she feared had incapacitated himself from finding his chaise, by the very method he had taken to gather courage for seeking it.

This, however, was but the apprehension of a moment; another and a far more horrible one drove it from her imagination: for scarcely had Mr. Harrel quitted the box and their sight, before their ears were suddenly struck with the report of a pistol.

Mrs. Harrel gave a loud scream, which was involuntarily echoed by Cecilia: everybody arose, some with officious zeal to serve the ladies, and others to hasten to the spot whence the dreadful sound proceeded.

Sir Robert Floyer again offered his services in conducting them home; but they could listen to no such proposal: Cecilia with difficulty refrained from rushing out herself to discover what was passing; but her dread of being followed by Mrs. Harrel prevented her; they both, therefore, waited,

expecting every instant some intelligence, as all but the baronet and Mr. Marriot were now gone to seek it.

Nobody, however, returned; and their terrors encreased every moment: Mrs. Harrel wanted to run out herself, but Cecilia, conjuring her to keep still, begged Mr. Marriot to bring them some account. Mr. Marriot, like the messengers who had preceded him, came not back: an instant seemed an age, and Sir Robert Floyer was also entreated to procure information.

Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia were now left to themselves, and their horror was too great for speech or motion: they stood close to each other, listening to every sound, and receiving every possible addition to their alarm, by the general confusion which they observed in the gardens, in which, though both gentlemen and waiters were running to and fro, not a creature was walking, and all amusement seemed forgotten.

From this dreadful state they were at length removed, though not relieved, by the sight of a waiter, who, as he was passing, showed himself almost covered with blood! Mrs. Harrel vehemently called after him, demanding whence it came? "From the gentleman, ma'am," answered he in haste, "that has shot himself," and then ran on.

Mrs. Harrel uttered a piercing scream, and sunk on the the ground; for Cecilia, shuddering with horror, lost all her own strength, and could no longer lend her any support.

So great at this time was the general confusion of the place, that for some minutes their particular distress was unknown, and their situation unnoticed; till at length an elderly gentleman came up to the box, and humanely offered his assistance.

Cecilia, pointing to her unfortunate friend, who had not fallen into a fainting fit, but merely from weakness and terror, accepted his help in raising her. She was lifted up, however, without the smallest effort on her own part, and was only kept upon her seat by being held there by the stranger, for Cecilia, whose whole frame was shaking, tried in vain to sustain her.

This gentleman, from the violence of their distress, began now to suspect its motive, and addressing himself to Cecilia, said, "I am afraid, madam, this unfortunate gentleman was some relation to you?"

Neither of them spoke, but their silence was sufficiently expressive.

"It is pity, madam," he continued, "that some friend can't order him out of the crowd, and have him kept quiet till a surgeon can be brought."

"A surgeon!" exclaimed Cecilia, recovering from one surprise by the effect of another, "is it then possible he may be saved?"

And without waiting to have her question answered, she ran out of the box herself, flying wildly about the garden, and calling for help as she flew, till she found the house by the entrance; and then, going up to the bar, "Is a surgeon sent for?" she exclaimed, "let a surgeon be fetched instantly!" "A surgeon, ma'am," she was answered, "Is not the gentleman dead?" "No, no, no!" she cried; "he must be brought in; let some careful people go and bring him in." Nor would she quit the bar, till two or three waiters were called, and received her orders. And then, eager to see them executed herself, she ran, fearless of being alone, and without thought of being lost, towards the fatal spot whither the crowd guided her. She could not, indeed, have been more secure from insult or molestation if surrounded by twenty guards; for the scene of desperation and horror which many had witnessed, and of which all had heard the signal, engrossed the universal attention, and took, even from the most idle and licentious, all spirit for gallantry and amusement.

Here, while making vain attempts to penetrate through the multitude, that she might see and herself judge the actual situation of Mr. Harrel, and give, if yet there was room for hope, such orders as would best conduce to his safety and recovery, she was met by Mr. Marriot, who entreated her not to press forward to a sight which he had found too shocking for himself, and insisted upon protecting her through the crowd.

"If he is alive," cried she, refusing his aid, "and if there is any chance he may be saved, no sight shall be too shocking to deter me from seeing him properly attended."

"All attendance," answered he, "will be in vain: he is not, indeed, yet dead, but his recovery is impossible. There is a surgeon with him already; one who happened to be in

the gardens, and he told me himself that the wound was inevitably mortal."

Cecilia, though greatly disappointed, still determined to make way to him, that she might herself enquire if, in his last moments, there was any thing he wished to communicate, or desired to have done: but, as she struggled to proceed, she was next met and stopt by Sir Robert Floyer, who, forcing her back, acquainted her that all was over!

The shock with which she received this account, though unmixed with any tenderness of regret, and resulting merely from general humanity, was yet so violent as almost to overpower her. Mr. Harrel, indeed, had forfeited all right to her esteem, and the unfeeling selfishness of his whole behaviour had long provoked her resentment and excited her disgust; yet a catastrophe so dreadful, and from which she had herself made such efforts to rescue him, filled her with so much horror, that, turning extremely sick, she was obliged to be supported to the nearest box, and stopt there for hartshorn and water.

A few minutes, however, sufficed to divest her of all care for herself, in the concern with which she recollected the situation of Mrs. Harrel; she hastened, therefore, back to her, attended by the baronet and Mr. Marriot, and found her still leaning upon the stranger, and weeping aloud.

The fatal news had already reached her; and though all affection between Mr. Harrel and herself had mutually subsided from the first two or three months of their marriage, a conclusion so horrible to all connection between them could not be heard without sorrow and distress. Her temper, too, naturally soft, retained not resentment, and Mr. Harrel, now separated from her for ever, was only remembered as the Mr. Harrel who first won her heart.

Neither pains nor tenderness were spared on the part of Cecilia to console her; who finding her utterly incapable either of acting or directing for herself, and knowing her at all times to be extremely helpless, now summoned to her own aid all the strength of mind she possessed, and determined upon this melancholy occasion, both to think and act for her widowed friend to the utmost stretch of her abilities and power.

As soon, therefore, as the first effusions of her grief were

over, she prevailed with her to go to the house, where she was humanely offered the use of a quiet room till she should be better able to set off for town.

Cecilia, having seen her thus safely lodged, begged Mr. Marriot to stay with her, and then, accompanied by the baronet, returned herself to the bar, and desiring the footman who had attended them to be called, sent him instantly to his late master, and proceeded next with great presence of mind, to enquire further into the particulars of what had passed, and to consult upon what was immediately to be done with the deceased: for she thought it neither decent nor right to leave to chance or to strangers the last duties which could be paid him.

He had lingered, she found, about a quarter of an hour, but in a condition too dreadful for description, quite speechless, and, by all that could be judged, out of his senses; yet so distorted with pain, and wounded so desperately beyond any power of relief, that the surgeon, who every instant expected his death, said it would not be merely useless but inhuman, to remove him till he had breathed his last. He died, therefore, in the arms of this gentleman and a waiter.

"A waiter!" cried Cecilia, reproachfully looking at Sir Robert, "and was there no friend who, for the few poor poor moments that remained, had patience to support him!"

"Where would be the good," said Sir Robert, "of supporting a man in his last agonies?"

This unfeeling speech she attempted not to answer; but, suffering neither her dislike to him, nor her scruples for herself, to interfere with the present occasion, she desired to have his advice what was now best to be done.

Undertakers' men must immediately, he said, be sent for to remove the body.

She then gave orders for that purpose, which were instantly executed.

Whither the body was to go was the next question: Cecilia wished the removal to be directly to the town-house, but Sir Robert told her it must be carried to the nearest undertaker's, and kept there till it could be conveyed to town in a coffin.

For this also, in the name of Mrs. Harrel, she gave

directions. And then addressing herself to Sir Robert, "You will now, sir, I hope," she said, "return to the fatal spot, and watch by your late unfortunate friend, till the proper people arrive to take charge of him."

"And what good will that do?" cried he; "had I not better watch by you?"

"It will do good," answered she, with some severity, "to decency and to humanity; and surely you cannot refuse to see who is with him, and in what situation he lies, and whether he has met, from the strangers with whom he was left, the tenderness and care which his friends ought to have paid him."

"Will you promise then," he answered, "not to go away till I come back? for I have no great ambition to sacrifice the living for the dead."

"I will promise nothing, sir," said she, shocked at his callous insensibility; "but if you refuse this last poor office, I must apply elsewhere; and firmly I believe there is no other I can ask who will a moment hesitate in complying."

She then went back to Mrs. Harrel, leaving, however, an impression upon the mind of Sir Robert, that made him no longer dare dispute her commands.

Her next solicitude was how they should return to town: they had no equipage of their own, and the only servant who came with them was employed in performing the last duties for his deceased master. Her first intention was to order a hackney coach, but the deplorable state of Mrs. Harrel made it almost impossible she could take the sole care of her, and the lateness of the night, and their distance from home, gave her a dread invincible to going so far without some guard or assistant. Mr. Marriot earnestly desired to have the honour of conveying them to Portman-square in his own carriage, and notwithstanding there were many objections to such a proposal, the humanity of his behaviour upon the present occasion, and the evident veneration which accompanied his passion, joined to her encreasing aversion to the baronet, from whom she could not endure to receive the smallest obligation, determined her, after much perplexity and hesitation, to accept his offer.

She begged him, therefore, to immediately order his coach, and, happy to obey her, he went out with that design;

but, instantly coming back, told her, in a low voice, that they must wait some time longer, as the undertaker's people were then entering the garden, and if they stayed not till the removal had taken place, Mrs. Harrel might be shocked with the sight of some of the men, or perhaps even meet the dead body.

Cecilia, thanking him for this considerate precaution, readily agreed to defer setting out; devoting, meantime, all her attention to Mrs. Harrel, whose sorrow, though violent, forbad not consolation. But before the garden was cleared, and the carriage ordered, Sir Robert returned; saying to Cecilia, with an air of parading obedience which seemed to claim some applause, "Miss Beverley, your commands have been executed."

Cecilia made not any answer, and he presently added, "Whenever you choose to go I will order up my coach."

"*My* coach, sir," said Mr. Marriot, "will be ordered when the ladies are ready, and I hope to have the honour myself of conducting them to town."

"No, sir," cried the baronet, "that can never be; my long acquaintance with Mrs. Harrel gives me a prior right to attend her, and I can by no means suffer any other person to rob me of it."

"I have nothing," said Mr. Marriot, "to say to that, sir; but Miss Beverley herself has done me the honour to consent to make use of my carriage."

"Miss Beverley, I think," said Sir Robert, extremely piqued, "can never have sent me out of the way in order to execute her own commands, merely to deprive me of the pleasure of attending her and Mrs. Harrel home."

Cecilia, somewhat alarmed, now sought to lessen the favour of her decision, though she adhered to it without wavering.

"My intention," said she, "was not to confer, but to receive an obligation; and I had hoped, while Mr. Marriot assisted us, Sir Robert would be far more humanely employed in taking charge of what we cannot superintend, and yet are infinitely more anxious should not be neglected."

"That," said Sir Robert, "is all done; and I hope, therefore, after sending me upon such an errand, you don't mean to refuse me the pleasure of seeing you to town?"

"Sir Robert," said Cecilia, greatly displeased, "I cannot argue with you now; I have already settled my plan, and I am not at leisure to re-consider it."

Sir Robert bit his lips for a moment in angry silence; but not enduring to lose the victory to a young rival he despised, he presently said, "If I must talk no more about it to you, madam, I must at least beg leave to talk of it to this gentleman, and take the liberty to represent to him—"

Cecilia now, dreading how his speech might be answered, prevented its being finished, and with an air of the most spirited dignity, said, "Is it possible, sir, that at a time such as this, you should not be wholly indifferent to a matter so frivolous? little indeed will be the pleasure which our society can afford! your dispute, however, has given it some importance, and therefore Mr. Marriot must accept my thanks for his civility, and excuse me for retracting my consent."

Supplications and remonstrances were, however, still poured upon her by both, and the danger, the impossibility that two ladies could go to town alone, in a hackney coach, and without even a servant, at near four o'clock in the morning, they mutually urged, vehemently entreating that she would run no such hazard.

Cecilia was far other than insensible to these representations: the danger, indeed, appeared to her so formidable, that her inclination the whole time opposed her refusal; yet her repugnance to giving way to the overbearing baronet, and her fear of his resentment if she listened to Mr. Marriot, forced her to be steady, since she saw that her preference would prove the signal of a quarrel.

Inattentive, therefore, to their joint persecution, she again deliberated by what possible method she could get home in safety; but unable to devise any, she at last resolved to make enquiries of the people in the bar, who had been extremely humane and civil, whether they could assist or counsel her. She therefore desired the two gentlemen to take care of Mrs. Harrel, to which neither dared dissent, as both could not refuse, and hastily arising, went out of the room; but great indeed was her surprise when, as she was walking up to the bar, she was addressed by young Delvile!

Approaching her with that air of gravity and distance which of late he had assumed in her presence, he was beginning some speech about his mother; but the instant the sound of his voice reached Cecilia, she joyfully clasped her hands, and eagerly exclaimed, "Mr. Delvile!—O now we are safe!—this is fortunate indeed!"

"Safe, madam," cried he astonished, "yes, I hope so!—Has anything endangered your safety?"

"O, no matter for danger," cried she; "we will now trust ourselves with you, and I am sure you will protect us."

"Protect you!" repeated he again, and with warmth, "yes, while I live!—But what is the matter?—why are you so pale?—are you ill?—are you frightened?—what is the matter?"

And losing all coldness and reserve, with the utmost earnestness he begged her to explain herself.

"Do you not know," cried she, "what has happened? Can you be here, and not have heard it?"

"Heard what?" cried he; "I am but this moment arrived: my mother grew uneasy that she did not see you; she sent to your house, and was told that you were not returned from Vauxhall; some other circumstances also alarmed her, and therefore, late as it was, I came hither myself. The instant I entered this place, I saw you here. This is all my history; tell me now yours. Where is your party? where are Mr. and Mrs. Harrel?—Why are you alone?"

"O ask not!" cried she, "I cannot tell you!—take us but under your care, and you will soon know all."

She then hurried from him, and returning to Mrs. Harrel, said she had now a conveyance at once safe and proper, and begged her to rise and come away.

The gentlemen, however, rose first, each of them declaring he would himself attend them.

"No," said Cecilia, steadily, "that trouble will now be superfluous: Mrs. Delvile herself has sent for me, and her son is now waiting till we join him."

Amazement and disappointment at this intelligence were visible in the faces of them both: Cecilia waited not a single question, but finding she was unable to support Mrs. Harrel, who rather suffered herself to be carried than led, she

entrusted her between them, and ran forward to enquire of Delvile if his carriage was ready.

She found him with a look of horror that told the tale he had been hearing, listening to one of the waiters: the moment she appeared, he flew to her, and with the utmost emotion exclaimed, "Amiable Miss Beverley! what a dreadful scene have you witnessed! what a cruel task have you nobly performed! such spirit with such softness! so much presence of mind with such feeling!—But you are all excellence! human nature can rise no higher! I believe, indeed, you are its most perfect ornament!"

Praise such as this, so unexpected, and delivered with such energy, Cecilia heard not without pleasure, even at a moment when her whole mind was occupied by matters foreign to its peculiar interests. She made, however, her enquiry about the carriage, and he told her that he had come in a hackney coach, which was waiting for him at the door.

Mrs. Harrel was now brought in, and little was the recompence her assistants received for their aid, when they saw Cecilia so contentedly engaged with young Delvile, whose eyes were rivetted on her face, with an expression of the most lively admiration. Each, however, then quitted the other, and hastened to the fair mourner; no time was now lost, Mrs. Harrel was supported to the coach, Cecilia followed her, and Delvile, jumping in after them, ordered the man to drive to Portman-square.

Sir Robert and Mr. Marriot, confounded though enraged, saw their departure in passive silence: the right of attendance they had so tenaciously denied to each other, here admitted not of dispute: Delvile upon this occasion appeared as the representative of his father, and his authority seemed the authority of a guardian. Their only consolation was, that neither had yielded to the other, and all spirit of altercation or revenge was sunk in their mutual mortification. At the petition of the waiters, from sullen but proud emulation, they paid the expences of the night; and then throwing themselves into their carriages, returned to their respective houses.[1]

[1] "I think nothing struck me more forcibly than the Foxhall scene; —it is finely, it is powerfully imagined; it is a noble piece of morality!

CHAPTER VII.

A SOLUTION.

DURING the ride to town, not merely Cecilia, but Delvile himself attended wholly to Mrs. Harrel, whose grief, as it became less violent, was more easy to be soothed.

The distress of this eventful night was however not yet over; when they came to Portland-square, Delvile eagerly called to the coachman not to drive up to the house, and anxiously begged Cecilia and Mrs. Harrel to sit still while he went out himself to make some enquiries. They were surprised at the request, yet immediately consented; but before he had quitted them, Davison, who was watching their return, came up to them with information that an execution was then in the house.

Fresh misery was now opened for Mrs. Harrel, and fresh horror and perplexity for Cecilia. She had no longer, however, the whole weight either of thought or of conduct upon herself; Delvile in her cares took the most animated interest; and beseeching her to wait a moment and appease her friend, he went himself into the house to learn the state of the affair.

He returned in a few minutes, and seemed in no haste to communicate what he had heard, but entreated them both to go immediately to St. James's-square.

Cecilia felt extremely fearful of offending his father by the introduction of Mrs. Harrel; yet she had nothing better to propose, and therefore, after a short and distressed argument, she complied.

Delvile then told her that the alarm of his mother, at which he had already hinted, proceeded from a rumour of this

—the variety—the contrast of the different characters quite new and unhackneyed, and yet perfectly in nature; and the dreadful catastrophe that concludes the whole makes it a masterpiece."—*Mr. Crisp to Miss Burney*, Sept. 25, 1782.

very misfortune, to which, though they knew not whether they might give credit, was owing the anxiety which at so late an hour had induced him to go to Vauxhall in search of her.

They gained admittance without any disturbance, as the servant of young Delvile had been ordered to sit up for his master. Cecilia much disliked thus taking possession of the house in the night-time, though Delvile, solicitous to relieve her, desired she would not waste a thought upon the subject, and making his servant show her the room which had been prepared for her reception, he begged her to compose her spirits, and to comfort her friend, and promised to acquaint his father and mother, when they arose, with what had happened, that she might be saved all pain from surprise or curiosity when they met.

This service she thankfully accepted, for she dreaded, after the liberty she had taken, to encounter the pride of Mr. Delvile without some previous apology; and she feared still more to see his lady without the same preparation, as her frequent breach of appointment might reasonably have offended her, and as her displeasure would affect her more deeply.

It was now near six o'clock, yet the hours seemed as long as they were melancholy till the family arose. They settled to remain quiet till some message was sent to them; but before any arrived, Mrs. Harrel, who was seated upon the bed, wearied by fatigue and sorrow, cried herself to sleep like a child.

Cecilia rejoiced in seeing this reprieve from affliction, though her keener sensations unfitted her from partaking of it. Much indeed was the uneasiness which kept her awake; the care of Mrs. Harrel seemed to devolve upon herself, the reception she might meet from the Delviles was uncertain, and the horrible adventures of the night refused for a moment to quit her remembrance.

At ten o'clock, a message was brought from Mrs. Delvile, to know whether they were ready for breakfast.

Mrs. Harrel was still asleep, but Cecilia carried her own answer by hastening down stairs.

In her way she was met by young Delvile, whose air, upon first approaching her, spoke him again prepared to

address her with the most distant gravity: but almost the moment he looked at her, he forgot his purpose; her paleness, the heaviness of her eyes, and the fatigue of long watching betrayed by her whole face, again surprised him into all the tenderness of anxiety, and he enquired after her health not as a compliment of civility, but as a question in which his whole heart was most deeply interested.

Cecilia thanked him for his attention to her friend the night before, and then proceeded to his mother.

Mrs. Delvile, coming forward to meet her, removed at once all her fears of displeasure, and banished all necessity of apology, by instantly embracing her, and warmly exclaiming, "Charming Miss Beverley! how shall I ever tell you half the admiration with which I have heard of your conduct! The exertion of so much fortitude, at a juncture when a weaker mind would have been overpowered by terror; and a heart less under the dominion of well-regulated principles, would have sought only its own relief by flying from distress and confusion, shows such *propriety of mind* as can only result from the union of good sense with virtue. You are indeed a noble creature! I thought so from the moment I beheld you; I shall think so, I hope, to the last that I live!"

Cecilia, penetrated with joy and gratitude, felt in that instant the amplest recompense for all that she had suffered, and for all that she had lost. Such praise from Mrs. Delvile was alone sufficient to make her happy; but when she considered whence it sprung, and that the circumstances with which she was so much struck, must have been related to her by her son, her delight was augmented to an emotion the most pleasing she could experience, from seeing how high she was held in the esteem of those who were highest in her own.

Mrs. Delvile then, with the utmost cordiality, began to talk of her affairs, saving her the pain of proposing the change of habitation that now seemed unavoidable, by an immediate invitation to her house, which she made with as much delicacy as if Mr. Harrel's had still been open to her, and choice, not necessity, had directed her removal. The whole family, she told her, went into the country in two days; and she hoped that a new scene, with quietness and

early hours, would restore both the bloom and sprightliness which her late cares and restlessness had injured. And though she very seriously lamented the rash action of Mr. Harrel, she much rejoiced in the acquisition which her own house and happiness would receive from her society.

She next discussed the situation of her widowed friend, and Cecilia produced the packet which had been entrusted to her by her late husband. Mrs. Delvile advised her to open it in the presence of Mr. Arnott, and begged her to send for any other of her friends she might wish to see or consult, and to claim freely from herself whatever advice or assistance she could bestow.

And then, without waiting for Mr. Delvile, she suffered her to swallow a hasty breakfast, and return to Mrs. Harrel, whom she had desired the servants to attend, as she concluded that in her present situation she would not choose to make her appearance.

Cecilia, lightened now from all her own cares, more pleased than ever with Mrs. Delvile, and enchanted that at last she was settled under her roof, went back with as much ability as inclination to give comfort to Mrs. Harrel. She found her but just awaking, and scarce yet conscious where she was, or why not in her own house.

As her powers of recollection returned, she was soothed with the softest compassion by Cecilia, who, in pursuance of Mrs. Delvile's advice, sent her servant in search of Mr. Arnott, and in consequence of her permission, wrote a note of invitation to Mr. Monckton.

Mr. Arnott, who was already in town, soon arrived; his own man, whom he had left to watch the motions of Mr. Harrel, having early in the morning rode to the place of his retreat, with the melancholy tidings of the suicide and execution.

Cecilia instantly went down stairs to him. The meeting was extremely painful to them both. Mr. Arnott severely blamed himself for his flight, believing it had hastened the fatal blow, which some further sacrifices might perhaps have eluded; and Cecilia half repented the advice she had given him, though the failure of her own efforts proved the situation of Mr. Harrel too desperate for remedy.

He then made the tenderest enquiries about his sister,

and entreated her to communicate to him the minutest particulars of the dreadful transaction: after which, she produced the packet, but neither of them had the courage to break the seal; and concluding the contents would be no less than his last will, they determined some third person should be present when they opened it. Cecilia wished much for Mr. Monckton, but as his being immediately found was uncertain, and the packet might consist of orders which ought not to be delayed, she proposed, for the sake of expedition, to call in Mr. Delvile.

Mr. Arnott readily agreed, and she sent to beg a moment's audience with that gentleman.

She was desired to walk into the breakfast-room, where he was sitting with his lady and his son.

Not such was now her reception as when she entered that apartment before. Mr. Delvile looked displeased and out of humour, and, making her a stiff bow, while his son brought her a chair, coldly said, "If you are hurried, Miss Beverley, I will attend you directly; if not, I will finish my breakfast, as I shall have but little time the rest of the morning, from the concourse of people upon business who will crowd upon me till dinner, most of whom will be extremely distressed if I leave town without contriving to see them."

"There is not the least occasion, sir," answered Cecilia, "that I should trouble you to quit the room: I merely came to beg you would have the goodness to be present, while Mr. Arnott opens a small packet which was last night put into my hands by Mr. Harrel."

"And has Mr. Arnott," answered he, somewhat sternly, "thought proper to send me such a request?"

"No, sir," said Cecilia, "the request is mine; and if, as I now fear, it is impertinent, I must entreat you to forget it."

"As far as relates merely to yourself," returned Mr. Delvile, "it is another matter; but certainly Mr. Arnott can have no possible claim upon my time or attention; and I think it rather extraordinary, that a young man with whom I have no sort of connection or commerce, and whose very name is almost unknown to me, should suppose a person in my style of life so little occupied as to be wholly at his command."

"He had no such idea, sir," said Cecilia, greatly disconcerted; "the honour of your presence is merely solicited by myself, and simply from the apprehension that some directions may be contained in the papers, which, perhaps, ought immediately to be executed."

"I am not, I repeat," said Mr. Delvile, more mildly, "displeased at your part of this transaction; your want of experience and knowledge of the world makes you not at all aware of the consequences which may follow my compliance: the papers you speak of may perhaps be of great importance, and hereafter the first witnesses to their being read may be publicly called upon. You know not the trouble such an affair may occasion, but Mr. Arnott ought to be better informed."

Cecilia, making another apology for the error which she had committed, was in no small confusion quitting the room; but Mr. Delvile, perfectly appeased by seeing her distress, stopt her to say, with much graciousness, "For your sake, Miss Beverley, I am sorry I cannot act in this business; but you see how I am situated! overpowered with affairs of my own, and people who can do nothing without my orders. Besides, should there hereafter be any investigation into the matter, my name might, perhaps, be mentioned; and it would be superfluous to say how ill I should think it used by being brought into such company."

Cecilia then left the room, secretly vowing that no possible exigence should in future tempt her to apply for assistance to Mr. Delvile, which, however ostentatiously offered, was constantly with-held when claimed.

She was beginning to communicate to Mr. Arnott her ill success, when young Delvile, with an air of eagerness, followed her into the room. "Pardon me," he cried, "for this intrusion,—but, tell me, is it impossible that in this affair I can represent my father? may not the office you meant for him, devolve upon me? remember how near we are to each other, and honour me for once by supposing us the same!"

"Ah, who, or what," thought Cecilia, "can be so different!" She thanked him, with much sweetness, for his offer, but declined accepting it, saying, "I will not, now I

know the inconveniencies of my request, be so selfish as even to suffer it should be granted."

"You must not deny me," cried he; "where is the packet? why should you lose a moment?"

"Rather ask," answered she, "why I should permit *you* to lose a moment in a matter that does not concern you? and to risk, perhaps, the loss of many moments hereafter, from a too incautious politeness." "And what can I risk," cried he, "half so precious as your smallest satisfaction? Do you suppose I can flatter myself with a possibility of contributing to it, and yet have the resolution to refuse myself so much pleasure? No, no, the heroic times are over, and self-denial is no longer in fashion!"

"You are very good," said Cecilia: "but indeed after what has passed—"

"No matter for what has passed," interrupted he, "we are now to think of what is to come. I know you too well to doubt your impatience in the execution of a commission which circumstances have rendered sacred; and should any thing either be done or omitted contrary to the directions in your packet, will you not be apt, blameless as you are, to disturb yourself with a thousand fears that you took not proper methods for the discharge of your trust?"

There was something in this earnestness so like his former behaviour, and so far removed from his late reserve, that Cecilia, who perceived it with a pleasure she could hardly disguise, now opposed him no longer, but took up the packet, and broke the seal.

And then, to her no small amazement, instead of the expected will, she found a roll of enormous bills, and a collection of letters from various creditors, threatening the utmost severity of the law, if their demands were longer unanswered.

Upon a slip of paper which held these together, was written, in Mr. Harrel's hand,

To be all paid to-night with a BULLET.

Next appeared two letters of another sort; the first of which was from Sir Robert Floyer, and in these words:

SIR,

As all prospects are now over of the alliance, I hope you

will excuse my reminding you of the affair at Brookes's[1] of last Christmas. I have the honour to be,

SIR, Your's,
R. FLOYER.

The other was from Mr. Marriot.

SIR,

Though I should think £2,000 nothing for the smallest hope, I must take the liberty to say I think it a great deal for only ten minutes: you can't have forgot, Sir, the terms of our agreement, but as I find you cannot keep to them, I must beg to be off also on my side; and I am persuaded you are too much a man of honour to take advantage of my over-eagerness in parting with my money without better security.

I am, SIR,
Your most humble servant,
A. MARRIOT.

What a scene of fraud, double-dealing, and iniquity was here laid open! Cecilia, who at first meant to read every thing aloud, found the attempt utterly vain, for so much was she shocked, that she could hardly read on to herself.

Last of all appeared a paper in Mr. Harrel's own hand-writing, containing these words:

For Mrs. HARREL, Miss BEVERLEY, and Mr. ARNOTT.

I can struggle no longer, the last blow must now be struck! another day robs me of my house and my liberty, and blasts me by the fatal discovery of my double attempts.

This is what I have wished; wholly to be freed, or ruined past all resource, and driven to the long-projected remedy.

A burthen has my existence been these two years, gay as I have appeared; not a night have I gone to bed, but

[1] Brooks's Club was originally a gaming society. It was begun by Almack, and carried on by Brooks, a wine merchant and money-lender, who opened the present house in 1778.

"Some of the original rules, which I have been permitted to inspect, will show the nature of the club."—CUNNINGHAM.

"Rule 40. That every person playing at the new quinze table do keep fifty guineas before him. 41. That every person playing at the twenty guinea table do not keep less than twenty guineas before him."

heated and inflamed from a gaming table; not a morning have I awaked, but to be soured with a dun!

I would not lead such a life again, if the slave who works hardest at the oar would change with me.

Had I a son, I would bequeath him a plough; I should then leave him happier than my parents left me.

Idleness has been my destruction; the want of something to do led me into all evil.

A good wife perhaps might have saved me, mine,—I thank her! tried not. Disengaged from me and my affairs, her own pleasures and amusements have occupied her solely. Dreadful will be the catastrophe she will see to-night; let her bring it home, and live better!

If any pity is felt for me, it will be where I have least deserved it! Mr. Arnott—Miss Beverley! it will come from you!

To bring myself to this final resolution, hard, I confess, have been my conflicts: it is not that I have feared death, no, I have long wished it, for shame and dread have embittered my days; but something there is within me that causes a deeper horror,—that asks my preparation for another world! that demands my authority for quitting this!—what may hereafter—O terrible!——Pray for me, generous Miss Beverley!——kind, gentle Mr. Arnott, pray for me!—

Wretch as Mr. Harrel appeared, without religion, principle, or honour, this incoherent letter, evidently written in the desperate moment of determined suicide, very much affected both Cecilia and Mr. Arnott; and in spite either of abhorrence or resentment, they mutually shed tears over the address to themselves.

Delvile, to whom every part of the affair was new, could only consider these papers as so many specimens of guilt and infamy; he read them, therefore, with astonishment and detestation, and openly congratulated Cecilia upon having escaped the double snares that were spread for her.

While this was passing, Mr. Monckton arrived; who felt but little satisfaction from beholding the lady of his heart in confidential discourse with two of his rivals, one of whom had long attacked her by the dangerous flattery of perse-

verance, and the other, without any attack, had an influence yet more powerful.

Delvile, having performed the office for which he came, concluded, upon the entrance of Mr. Monckton, that Cecilia had nothing further to wish from him; for her long acquaintance with that gentleman, his being a *married man*, and her neighbour in the country, were circumstances well known to him: he merely, therefore, enquired if she would honour him with any commands, and upon her assuring him she had none, he quietly withdrew.

This was no little relief to Mr. Monckton, into whose hands Cecilia then put the fatal packet; and while he was reading it, at the desire of Mr. Arnott, she went up stairs to prepare Mrs. Harrel for his admission.

Mrs. Harrel, unused to solitude, and as eager for company when unhappy to console, as when easy to divert her, consented to receive him with pleasure: they both wept at the meeting; and Cecilia, after some words of general comfort, left them together.

She had then a very long and circumstantial conversation with Mr. Monckton, who explained whatever had appeared dark in the writings left by Mr. Harrel, and who came to her before he saw them, with full knowledge of what they contained.

Mr. Harrel had contracted with Sir Robert Floyer a large debt of honour, before the arrival in town of Cecilia; and having no power to discharge it, he promised that the prize he expected in his ward should fall to his share, upon condition that the debt was cancelled.

Nothing was thought more easy than to arrange this business, for the baronet was always to be in her way, and the report of the intended alliance was to keep off all other pretenders. Several times, however, her coldness made him think the matter hopeless; and when he received her letter, he would have given up the whole affair: but Mr. Harrel, well knowing his inability to satisfy the claims that would follow such a defection, constantly persuaded him the reserve was affected, and that his own pride and want of assiduity occasioned all her discouragement.

But while thus, by amusing the baronet with false hopes, he kept off his demands, those of others were not less

clamorous: his debts encreased, his power of paying them diminished; he grew sour and desperate, and in one night lost £3,000 beyond what he could produce, or offer any security for.

This, as he said, was *what he wished;* and now he was, for the present, to extricate himself by doubling stakes and winning, or to force himself into suicide by doubling such a loss. For though, with tolerable ease, he could forget accounts innumerable with his tradesmen, one neglected *debt of honour* rendered his existence insupportable!

For this last great effort, his difficulty was to raise the £3,000 already due, without which the proposal could not be made; and, after various artifices and attempts, he at length contrived a meeting with Mr. Marriot, intreated him to lend him £2,000 for only two days, and offered his warmest services in his favour with Cecilia.

The rash and impassioned young man, deceived by his accounts into believing that his ward was wholly at his disposal, readily advanced the money, without any other condition than that of leave to visit freely at his house, to the exclusion of Sir Robert Floyer. "The other £1,000," continued Mr. Monckton, "I know not how he obtained, but he certainly had three. You, I hope, were not so unguarded——"

"Ah, Mr. Monckton," said Cecilia, "blame me not too severely! the attacks that were made,—the necessity of otherwise betraying the worthy and half-ruined Mr. Arnott—"

"O fie!" cried he, "to suffer *your* understanding to be lulled asleep, because the weak-minded Mr. Arnott's could not be kept awake! I thought, after such cautions from me, and such experience of your own, you could not again have been thus duped."

"I thought so too," answered she; "but yet when the trial came on,—indeed you know not how I was persecuted."

"Yet you see," returned he, "the utter inutility of the attempt; you see, and I told you before-hand, that nothing could save him."

"True; but had I been firmer in refusal, I might not so well have known it; I might then have upbraided myself

with supposing that my compliance would have rescued him."

"You have indeed," cried Mr. Monckton, "fallen into most worthless hands, and the Dean was much to blame for naming so lightly a guardian to a fortune such as yours."

"Pardon me," cried Cecilia, "he never entrusted him with my fortune, he committed it wholly to Mr. Briggs."

"But if he knew not the various subterfuges by which such a caution might be baffled, he ought to have taken advice of those who were better informed. Mr. Briggs, too! what a wretch! mean, low, vulgar, sordid!—the whole city of London, I believe, could not produce such another! how unaccountable to make you the ward of a man whose house you cannot enter without disgust!"

"His house," cried Cecilia, "my uncle never wished me to enter: he believed, and he was right, that my fortune would be safe in his hands; but for myself, he concluded I should always reside at Mr. Harrel's."

"But does not the city at this time," said Mr. Monckton, "abound in families where, while your fortune was in security, you might yourself have lived with propriety? Nothing requires circumspection so minute as the choice of a guardian to a girl of large fortune; and in general one thing only is attended to, an appearance of property. Morals, integrity, character, are either not thought of, or investigated so superficially, that the enquiry were as well wholly omitted."

He then continued his relation.

Mr. Harrel hastened with his £3,000 to the gaming table; one throw of the dice settled the business; he lost, and ought immediately to have doubled the sum. That, however, was never more likely to be in his power; he knew it; he knew, too, the joint claims of Cecilia's deceived admirers, and that his house was again threatened with executions from various quarters:—he went home, loaded his pistols, and took the methods already related to work himself into courage for the deed.

The means by which Mr. Monckton had procured these particulars were many and various, and not all such as he could avow; since, in the course of his researches, he had

tampered with servants and waiters, and scrupled at no methods that led but to discovery.

Nor did his intelligence stop here. He had often, he said, wondered at the patience of Mr. Harrel's creditors, but now even that was cleared up by a fresh proof of infamy: he had been himself at the house in Portman-square, where he was informed that Mr. Harrel had kept them quiet, by repeated assurances that his ward, in a short time, meant to lend him money for discharging them all.

Cecilia saw now but too clearly the reason her stay in his house was so important to him; and wondered less at his vehemence upon that subject, though she detested it more.

"Oh, how little," cried she, "are the gay and the dissipated to be known upon a short acquaintance! Expensive, indeed, and thoughtless and luxurious he appeared to me immediately; but fraudulent, base, designing, capable of every pernicious art of treachery and duplicity,—such, indeed, I expected not to find him; his very flightiness and levity seemed incompatible with such hypocrisy."

"His flightiness," said Mr. Monckton, "proceeded not from gaiety of heart, it was merely the effect of effort; and his spirits were as mechanical as his taste for diversion. He had not strong parts, nor were his vices the result of his passions; had economy been as much in fashion as extravagance, he would have been equally eager to practise it; he was a mere time-server, he struggled but to be *something*, and having neither talents nor sentiment to know *what*, he looked around him for any pursuit, and seeing distinction was more easily attained in the road to ruin than in any other, he galloped along it, thoughtless of being thrown when he came to the bottom, and sufficiently gratified in showing his horsemanship by the way."

And now, all that he had either to hear or to communicate upon this subject being told, he enquired, with a face strongly expressive of his disapprobation, why he found her at Mr. Delvile's, and what had become of her resolution to avoid his house?

Cecilia, who, in the hurry of her mind and her affairs, had wholly forgotten that such a resolution had been taken, blushed at the question, and could not, at first, recollect what had urged her to break it: but when he proceeded to

mention Mr. Briggs, she was no longer distressed; she gave a circumstantial account of her visit to him, related the mean misery in which he lived, and told him the impracticability of her residing in such a house.

Mr. Monckton could now in decency make no further opposition, however painful and reluctant was his acquiescence: yet before he quitted her, he gave himself the consolation of considerably obliging her, and softened his chagrin by the sweetness of her acknowledgments.

He enquired how much money, in all, she had now taken up of the Jew; and hearing it was £9,050, he represented to her the additional loss she must suffer by paying an exorbitant interest for so large a sum, and the almost certainty with which she might be assured of very gross imposition: he expatiated, also, upon the injury which her character might receive in the world, were it known that she used such methods to procure money, since the circumstances which had been her inducement would probably either be unnoticed or misrepresented; and when he had awakened in her much uneasiness and regret upon this subject, he offered to pay the Jew without delay, clear her wholly from his power, and quietly receive the money when she came of age from herself.

A proposal so truly friendly made her look upon the regard of Mr. Monckton in a higher and nobler point of view than her utmost esteem and reverence had hitherto placed it: yet she declined at first accepting the offer, from an apprehension it might occasion him inconvenience; but when he assured her he had a yet larger sum lying at present useless in a banker's hands, and promised to receive the same interest for his money he should be paid from the funds, she joyfully listened to him; and it was settled that they should send for the Jew, take his discharge, and utterly dismiss him.

Mr. Monckton, however, fearful of appearing too officious in her affairs, wished not to have his part in the transaction published, and advised Cecilia not to reveal the matter to the Delviles. But great as was his ascendant over her mind, her aversion to mystery and hypocrisy were still greater; she would not, therefore, give him this promise, though her own desire to wait some seasonable opportunity

for disclosing it, made her consent that their meeting with the Jew should be at the house of Mrs. Roberts in Fetter-lane, at twelve o'clock the next morning; where she might also see Mrs. Hill and her children before she left town.

They now parted, Cecilia charmed more than ever with her friend, whose kindness, as she suspected not his motives, seemed to spring from the most disinterested generosity.

That, however, was the smallest feature in the character of Mr. Monckton, who was entirely a man of the world, shrewd, penetrating, attentive to his interest, and watchful of every advantage to improve it. In the service he now did Cecilia, he was gratified by giving her pleasure, but that was by no means his only gratification: he still hoped her fortune would one day be his own, he was glad to transact any business with her, and happy in making her owe to him an obligation: but his principal inducement was yet stronger: he saw with much alarm the facility of her liberality; and he feared while she continued in correspondence with the Jew, that the easiness with which she could raise money would be a motive with her to continue the practice whenever she was softened by distress, or subdued by entreaty: but he hoped, by totally concluding the negotiation, the temptation would be removed: and that the hazard and inconvenience of renewing it, would strengthen her aversion to such an expedient, till, between difficulties and disuse, that dangerous resource would be thought of no more.

Cecilia then returned to Mrs. Harrel, whom she found as she had left, weeping in the arms of her brother. They consulted upon what was best to be done, and agreed that she ought instantly to leave town; for which purpose a chaise was ordered directly. They settled also that Mr. Arnott, when he had conveyed her to his country house, which was in Suffolk, should hasten back to superintend the funeral, and see if any thing could be saved from the creditors for his sister.

Yet this plan, till Cecilia was summoned to dinner, they had not the resolution to put in practice. They were then obliged to be gone, and their parting was very melancholy. Mrs. Harrel wept immoderately, and Mr. Arnott felt a concern too tender for avowal, though too sincere for con-

cealment. Cecilia, however glad to change her situation, was extremely depressed by their sorrow, and entreated to have frequent accounts of their proceedings, warmly repeating her offers of service, and protestations of faithful regard.

She accompanied them to the chaise, and then went to the dining parlour, where she found Mr. and Mrs. Delvile, but saw nothing more of their son the whole day.

The next morning after breakfast, Mrs. Delvile set out upon some leave-taking visits, and Cecilia went in a chair to Fetter-lane: here, already waiting for her, she met the punctual Mr. Monckton, and the disappointed Jew, who most unwillingly was paid off, and relinquished his bonds; and who found in the severe and crafty Mr. Monckton, another sort of man to deal with than the necessitous and heedless Mr. Harrel.

As soon as he was dismissed, other bonds were drawn and signed, the old ones were destroyed; and Cecilia, to her infinite satisfaction, had no creditor but Mr. Monckton. Her bookseller, indeed, was still unpaid, but her debt with him was public, and gave her not any uneasiness.

She now, with the warmest expressions of gratitude, took leave of Mr. Monckton, who suffered the most painful struggles in repressing the various apprehensions to which the parting, and her establishment at the Delviles gave rise.

She then enquired briefly into the affairs of Mrs. Hill, and having heard a satisfactory account of them, returned to St. James's-square.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DEBATE.

IT was still early, and Mrs. Delvile was not expected till late. Cecilia, therefore, determined to make a visit to Miss Belfield, to whom she had been denied during the late disorders at Mr. Harrel's, and whom she could not endure to mortify by quitting town without seeing, since whatever were her doubts about Delvile, of her she had none.

To Portland-street, therefore, she ordered her chair, deliberating as she went whether it were better to adhere to

the reserve she had hitherto maintained, or to satisfy her perplexity at once by an investigation into the truth. And still were these scruples undecided, when, looking in at the windows as she passed them to the door of the house, she perceived Miss Belfield standing in the parlour with a letter in her hand which she was fervently pressing to her lips,

Struck by this sight, a thousand painful conjectures occurred to her, all representing that the letter was from Delvile, and all explaining to his dishonour the mystery of his late conduct. And far were her suspicions from diminishing, when, upon being shown into the parlour, Miss Belfield, trembling with her eagerness to hide it, hastily forced the letter into her pocket.

Cecilia, surprised, dismayed, alarmed, stopt involuntarily at the door; but Miss Belfield, having secured what was so evidently precious to her, advanced, though not without blushing, and taking her hand, said "How good this is of you, madam, to come to me! when I did not know where to find you, and when I was almost afraid I should have found you no more!"

She then told her, that the first news she had heard the preceding morning, was the violent death of Mr. Harrel, which had been related to her, with all its circumstances, by the landlord of their lodgings, who was himself one of his principal creditors, and had immediately been at Portman-square to put in his claims; where he had learnt that all the family had quitted the house, which was entirely occupied by bailiffs. "And I was so sorry," she continued, "that *you* should meet with any hardships, and not know where to go, and have another home to seek, when, I am sure, the commonest beggar would never want an habitation if you had one in your power to give him!—But how sad and melancholy you look! I am afraid this bad action of Mr. Harrel has made you quite unhappy? Ah, madam! you are too good for this guilty world! your own compassion and benevolence will not suffer you to rest in it!"

Cecilia, touched by this tender mistake of her present uneasiness, embraced her, and with much kindness, answered, "No, sweet Henrietta! it is *you* who are good, who are innocent, who are guileless!—*you*, too, I hope are happy!"

"And are not you, madam?" cried Henrietta, fondly returning her caresses. "Oh, if you are not, who will ever deserve to be! I think I should rather be unhappy myself, than see you so; at least I am sure I ought, for the whole world may be the better for your welfare, and as to me,—who would care what became of me!"

"Ah, Henrietta!" cried Cecilia, "do you speak sincerely? do you indeed think yourself so little valued?"

"Why, I don't say," answered she, "but that I hope there are some who think a little kindly of me, for if I had not that hope, I should wish to break my heart and die! but what is that to the love and reverence so many have for you?"

"Suppose," said Cecilia, with a forced smile, "I should put *your* love and reverence to the proof? do you think they would stand it?"

"O yes, indeed I do! and I have wished a thousand and a thousand times that I could but show you my affection, and let you see that I did not love you because you were a great lady, and high in the world, and full of power to do me service, but because you were so good and so kind, so gentle to the unfortunate, and so sweet to everybody!"

"Hold, hold!" cried Cecilia, "and let me try if indeed, fairly and truly, you will answer what I mean to ask."

"O yes," cried she, warmly, "if it is the dearest secret I have in the world! there is nothing I will not tell you; I will open my whole heart to you, and I shall be proud to think you will let me trust you,—for I am sure if you did not care a little for me, you would not take such a trouble."

"You are indeed a sweet creature!" said Cecilia, hesitating whether or not to take advantage of her frankness, "and every time I see you, I love you better. For the world would I not injure you,—and perhaps your confidence —I know not, indeed, if it is fair or right to exact it—" she stopt, extremely perplext, and while Henrietta waited her further enquiries, they were interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Belfield.

"Sure, child," cried she, to her daughter, "you might have let me know before now who was here, when you knew so well how much I wished an opportunity to see the young lady myself; but here you come down upon pretence to see

your brother, and then stay away all the morning, doing nobody knows what."

Then, turning to Cecilia, "Ma'am," she continued, "I have been in the greatest concern in the world for the little accident that happened when I saw you before; for to be sure I thought, and indeed nobody will persuade me to the contrary, that it was rather an odd thing for such a young lady as you to come so often after Henny, without so much as thinking of any other reason; especially when, to be sure, there's no more comparison between her and my son, than between anything in the world; however, if it is so, it is so, and I mean to say no more about it, and to be sure he's as contented to think so as if he was as mere an insignificant animal as could be."

"This matter, madam," said Cecilia, "has so long been settled, that I am sorry you should trouble yourself to think of it again."

"O, ma'am, I only mention it by the way of making the proper apology, for as to taking any other notice of it, I have quite left it off; though, to be sure, what I think I think; but as to my son, he has so got the upper hand of me, that it all goes for nothing, and I might just as well sing to him. Not that I mean to find fault with him, neither; so pray, ma'am, don't let what I say be to his prejudice, for I believe all the time, there's nobody like him, neither at this end of the town nor the other; for as to the other, he has more the look of a lord, by half, than of a shopman, and the reason's plain, for that's the sort of company he's always kept, as I dare say a lady such as you must have seen long ago. But for all that, there's some little matters that we mothers fancy we can see into as well as our children; however, if they don't think so, why it answers no purpose to dispute; for as to a better son, to be sure there never was one, and that, as I always say, is the best sign I know for making a good husband."

During this discourse, Henrietta was in the utmost confusion, dreading lest the grossness of her mother should again send off Cecilia in anger: but Cecilia, who perceived her uneasiness, and who was more charmed with her character than ever, from the simplicity of her sincerity, determined to save her that pain, quietly hearing her harangue,

and then quietly departing: though she was much provoked to find from the complaining hints every instant thrown out, that Mrs. Belfield was still internally convinced her son's obstinate bashfulness was the only obstacle to his choosing whom he pleased: and that though she no longer dared speak her opinion with openness, she was fully persuaded Cecilia was at his service.

"And for that reason," continued Mrs. Belfield, "to be sure any lady that knew her own true advantage, could do nothing better than to take the recommendation of a mother, who must naturally know more of her own children's disposition than can be expected from a stranger: and as to such a son as mine, perhaps there a'n't two such in the world, for he's had a gentleman's education, and turn him which way he will, he'll see never a handsomer person than his own; though, poor dear love, he was always of the thinnest. But the misfortunes he's had to struggle with would make nobody fatter."

Here she was interrupted, and Cecilia not a little surprised, by the entrance of Mr. Hobson and Mr. Simkins.

"Ladies," cried Mr. Hobson, whom she soon found was Mrs. Belfield's landlord: "I would not go up stairs without just stopping to let you know a little how the world goes."

Then perceiving and recollecting Cecilia, he exclaimed, "I am proud to see you again, ma'am,—Miss, I believe I should say, for I take it you are too young a lady to be entered into matrimony yet."

"Matrimony?" cried Mr. Simkins, "no, to be sure, Mr. Hobson, how can you be so out of the way? the young lady looks more like a miss from a boarding-school, if I might take the liberty for to say so."

"Ay, more's the pity," cried Mrs. Belfield, "for as to young ladies waiting and waiting, I don't see the great good of it; especially if a proper match offers: for as to a good husband, I think no lady should be above accepting him, if he's modest and well-behaved, and has been brought up with a genteel education."

"Why as to that, ma'am," said Mr. Simkins, "it's another-guess-matter, for as to the lady's having a proper spouse, if I may be so free, I think as it's no bad thing."

Cecilia, now, taking Henrietta's hand, was wishing her

good morning; but hearing Mr. Hobson say he was just come from Portman-square, her curiosity was excited, and she stayed a little longer.

"Sad work, ma'am," said he; "who'd have thought Mr. Harrel asked us all to supper for the mere purpose of such a thing as that! just to serve for a blind, as one may say. But when a man's conscience is foul, what I say is, it's ten to one but he makes away with himself. Let every man keep clear of the world, that's my notion, and then he will be in no such hurry to get out of it."

"Why indeed, ma'am," said Mr. Simkins, advancing with many bows to Cecilia, "humbly craving pardon for the liberty, I can't pretend for to say I think Mr. Harrel did quite the honourable thing by us; for as to his making us drink all that champagne, and the like, it was a sheer take-in; so that, if I was to speak my mind, I can't say as I esteem it much of a favour."

"Well," said Mrs. Belfield, "nothing's to me so surprising as a person's being his own executioner, for as to me, if I was to die for it fifty times, I don't think I could do it."

"So, here," resumed Mr. Hobson, "we're all defrauded of our dues! nobody's able to get his own, let him have worked for it ever so hard. Sad doings in the square, Miss! all at sixes and sevens; for my part I came off from Vauxhall as soon as the thing had happened, hoping to get the start of the others, or else I should have been proud to wait upon you, ladies, with the particulars: but a man of business never stands upon ceremony, for when money's at stake, that's out of the question. However, I was too late, for the house was seized before ever I could get nigh it."

"I hope, ma'am, if I may be so free," said Mr. Simkins, again profoundly bowing, "that you and the other lady did not take it much amiss my not coming back to you, for it was not out of no disrespect, but only I got so squeezed in by the ladies and gentlemen that was a looking on, that I could not make my way out, do what I could. But by what I see, I must needs say if one's in never such genteel company, people are always rather of the rudest when one's in a crowd, for if one begs and prays never so, there's no making 'em conformable."

"Pray," said Cecilia, "is it likely any thing will remain for Mrs. Harrel?"

"Remain, ma'am?" repeated Mr. Hobson, "yes, a matter of a hundred bills without a receipt to 'em! To be sure, ma'am, I don't want to affront you, that was his intimate acquaintance, more especially as you've done nothing disrespectful by me, which is more than I can say for Mrs. Harrel, who seemed downright ashamed of me, and of Mr. Simkins too, though, all things considered, 'twould have been as well for her not to have been quite so high. But of that in its proper season!"

"Fie, Mr. Hobson, fie!" cried the supple Mr. Simkins, "how can you be so hard? for my share, I must needs own I think the poor lady's to be pitied; for it must have been but a mollancholy sight to her, to see her spouse cut off so in the flower of his youth, as one may say; and you ought to scorn to take exceptions at a lady's proudness when she's in so much trouble. To be sure, I can't say myself as she was over complaisant to make us welcome; but I hope I am above being so unpitiful as for to owe her a grudge for it now she's so down in the mouth."

"Let everybody be civil!" cried Mr. Hobson, "that's my notion; and then I shall be as much above being unpitiful as anybody else."

"Mrs. Harrel," said Cecilia, "was then too unhappy, and is now, surely, too unfortunate, to make it possible any resentment should be harboured against her."

"You speak, ma'am, like a lady of sense," returned Mr. Hobson, "and, indeed, that's the character I hear of you; but for all that, ma'am, everybody's willing to stand up for their own friends, for which reason, ma'am, to be sure you'll be making the best of it, both for the relict, and the late gentleman himself; but, ma'am, if I was to make bold to speak my mind in a fair manner, what I should say would be this: a man here to go shooting himself with all his debts unpaid, is a mere piece of scandal, ma'am! I beg pardon, but what I say is, the truth's the truth, and I can't call it by no other nomination."

Cecilia, now, finding she had not any chance of pacifying him, rang for her servant and chair.

Mr. Simkins, then, affecting to lower his voice, said re-

proachfully to his friend "Indeed, Mr. Hobson, to speak ingenusly, I must needs say I don't think it over and above pelite in you to be so hard upon the young lady's acquaintance that was, now he's defunct. To be sure I can't pretend for to deny but he behaved rather comical; for not paying of nobody, nor so much as making one a little compliment, or the like, though he made no bones of taking all one's goods, and always choosed to have the prime of every thing, why it's what I can't pretend to stand up for. But that's neither here nor there, for if he had behaved as bad again, poor Miss could not tell how to help it; and I dares to say, she had no more hand in it than nobody at all."

"No, to be sure," cried Mrs. Belfield, "what should she have to do with it? do you suppose a young lady of her fortune would want to take advantage of a person in trade? I am sure it would be both a shame and a sin if she did, for if she has not money enough, I wonder who has. And for my part, I think when a young lady has such a fine fortune as that, the only thing she has to do, is to be thinking of making a good use of it, by dividing it, as one may say, with a good husband. For as to keeping it all for herself, I dare say she's a lady of too much generosity; and as to only marrying somebody that's got as much of his own, why it is not half so much a favour: and if the young lady would take my advice, she'd marry for love, for as to lucre, she's enough in all conscience."

"As to all that," said Mr. Hobson, "it makes no alteration in my argument; I am speaking to the purpose, and not for the matter of complaisance; and therefore I'm bold to say Mr. Harrel's action had nothing of the gentleman in it. A man has a right to his own life, you'll tell me; but what of that? that's no argument at all, for it does not give him a bit the more right to my property; and a man's running in debt, and spending other people's substances, for no reason in the world but just because he can blow out his own brains when he's done,—though it's a thing neither lawful nor religious to do,—why it's acting quite out of character, and a great hardship to trade into the bargain."

"I heartily wish it had been otherwise," said Cecilia. "but I still hope, if any thing can be done for Mrs. Harrel, you will not object to such a proposal."

"Ma'am, as I said before," returned Mr. Hobson, "I see you're a lady of sense, and for that I honour you; but as to any thing being done, it's what I call a distinct thing. What's mine is mine, and what's another man's is his; that's my way of arguing; but then if he takes what's mine, where's the law to hinder my taking what's his? This is what I call talking to the purpose. Now as to a man's cutting his throat, or the like of that, for blowing out his own brains may be called the self-same thing, what are his creditors the better for that? nothing at all, but so much the worse: it's a false notion to respect it, for there's no respect in it; it's contrary to law, and a prejudice against religion."

"I agree entirely in your opinion," said Cecilia, "but still Mrs. Harrel——" "I know your argument, ma'am," interrupted Mr. Hobson; "Mrs. Harrel i'n't the worse for her husband's being shot through the head, because she was no accessory to the same, and for that reason, it's a hardship she should lose all her substance; this, ma'am, is what I say, speaking to your side of the argument. But now, ma'am, please to take notice what I argue upon the reply; what have we creditors to do with a man's family? Suppose I am a cabinet-maker? When I send in my chairs, do I ask who is to sit upon them? No; it's all one to me whether it's the gentleman's progeny or his friends; I must be paid for the chairs the same, use them who may. That's the law, ma'am, and no man need be ashamed to abide by it."

The truth of this speech palliating its sententious absurdity, made Cecilia give up her faint attempt to soften him; and her chair being ready, she arose to take leave.

"Lack-a-day, ma'am," cried Mrs. Belfield, "I hope you won't go yet, for I expect my son home soon, and I've a heap of things to talk to you about besides, only Mr. Hobson having so much to say stopt my mouth. But I should take it as a great favour, ma'am, if you would come some afternoon and drink a dish of tea with me, for then we should have time to say all our say. And I'm sure, ma'am, if you would only let one of your footmen just take a run to let me know when you'd come, my son would be very proud to give you the meeting; and the servants can't have

much else to do at your house, for where there's such a heap of 'em, they commonly think of nothing all day long but standing and gaping at one another."

"I am going out of town to-morrow," said Cecilia, coldly, "and therefore cannot have the pleasure of calling upon Miss Belfield again."

She then slightly courtsied, and left the room.

The gentle Henrietta, her eyes swimming in tears, followed her to her chair; but she followed her not alone, Mrs. Belfield also attended, repining very loudly at the unlucky absence of her son: and the cringing Mr. Simkins, creeping after her and bowing, said in a low voice, "I humbly crave pardon, ma'am, for the liberty, but I hope you won't think as I have any share in Mr. Hobson's behaving so rude, for I must needs say, I don't think it over genteel in no shape." And Mr. Hobson himself, bent upon having one more sentence heard, called out, even after she was seated in her chair. "All I say, ma'am, is this; let every man be honest; that's what I argue, and that's my notion of things."[1]

Cecilia still reached home before Mrs. Delvile; but most uneasy were her sensations, and most unquiet was her heart: the letter she had seen in the hands of Henrietta seemed to corroborate all her former suspicions, since if it came not from one infinitely dear to her she would not have shown such fondness for it, and if that one was not dear to her in secret, she would not have concealed it.

Where then was the hope that any but Delvile could have written it? *in secret* she could not cherish *two*, and that Delvile was cherished most fondly, the artlessness of her character unfitted her for disguising.

[1] July 13, 1787. "I have heard nothing like what fell from him (Dr. Beattie) since under this roof I came; and I will not refrain, as his good opinion was equally gratifying and surprising to me, telling you what he most dwelt upon. 'What most,' cried he, 'has struck me is all that concerns a species of distress the most common in life, yet most neglected in representation—that of people of high cultivation and elegance forced to associate with those of gross and inferior capacities and manners. 'Tis a most just and feeling distress; yet you, as you have stated, have it *now*.' Whether he meant Evelina with the Branghtons, or Henrietta with her mother and Mr. Hobson, I know not."—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, p. 403, vol. iii.

And why should he write to her? what was his pretence? That he loved her she could now less than ever believe, since his late conduct to herself, though perplexing and inconsistent, evinced at least a partiality incompatible with a passion for another. What then could she infer, but that he had seduced her affections, and ruined her peace, for the idle and cruel gratification of temporary vanity?

"And if such," cried she, "is the depravity of this accomplished hypocrite, if such is the littleness of soul that a manner so noble disguises, shall he next, urged, perhaps, rather by prudence than preference, make *me* the object of his pursuit, and the food of his vain-glory? And shall *I*, warned and instructed as I am, be as easy a prey, and as wretched a dupe? No, I will be better satisfied with his conduct, before I venture to trust him, and since I am richer than Henrietta, and less likely to be deserted, when won, I will be more on my guard to know why I am addressed, and vindicate the rights of innocence, if I find she has been thus deluded, by forgetting his talents in his treachery, and renouncing him for ever!"

Such were the reflections and surmises that dampt all the long-sought pleasure of her change of residence, and made her habitation in St. James's-square no happier than it had been at Mr. Harrel's!

She dined again with only Mr. and Mrs. Delvile, and did not see their son all day; which, in her present uncertainty what to think of him, was an absence she scarcely regretted.

When the servants retired, Mr. Delvile told her that he had that morning received two visits upon her account, both from admirers, who each pretended to having had leave to wait upon her from Mr. Harrel.

He then named Sir Robert Floyer and Mr. Marriot.

"I believe, indeed," said Cecilia, "that neither of them were treated perfectly well; to me, however, their own behaviour has by no means been strictly honourable. I have always, when referred to, been very explicit; and what other methods they were pleased to take, I cannot wonder should fail."

"I told them," said Mr. Delvile, "that, since you were now under my roof, I could not refuse to receive their proposals, especially as there would be no impropriety in

your alliance with either of them: but I told them, at the same time, that I could by no means think of pressing their suit, as that was an office which, however well it might do for Mr. Harrel, would be totally improper and unbecoming for me."

"Certainly," said Cecilia, "and permit me, sir, to entreat that, should they again apply to you, they may be wholly discouraged from repeating their visits, and assured that far from having trifled with them hitherto, the resolutions I have declared will never be varied."

"I am happy," said Mrs. Delvile, "to see so much spirit and discernment where arts of all sorts will be practised to ensnare and delude. Fortune and independence were never so securely lodged as in Miss Beverley, and I doubt not but her choice, whenever it is decided, will reflect as much honour upon her heart, as her difficulty in making it does upon her understanding."

Mr. Delvile then enquired whether she had fixed upon any person to choose as a guardian in the place of Mr. Harrel. No, she said, nor should she, unless it were absolutely necessary. .

"I believe, indeed," said Mrs. Delvile, "your affairs will not much miss him! Since I have heard of the excess of his extravagance, I have extremely rejoiced in the uncommon prudence and sagacity of his fair ward, who, in such dangerous hands, with less penetration and sound sense, might have been drawn into a thousand difficulties, and perhaps defrauded of half her fortune."

Cecilia received but little joy from this most unseasonable compliment, which, with many of the same sort that were frequently, though accidentally made, intimidated her from the confession she had planned: and finding nothing but censure was likely to follow the discovery, she at length determined to give it up wholly, unless any connection should take place which might render necessary its avowal. Yet something she could not but murmur, that an action so detrimental to her own interest, and which, at the time, appeared indispensable to her benevolence, should now be considered as a mark of such folly and imprudence that she did not dare own it.

CHAPTER IX.

A RAILING.

THE next morning the family purposed setting off as soon as breakfast was over: young Delvile, however, waited not so long; the fineness of the weather tempted him, he said, to travel on horseback, and therefore he had risen very early, and was already gone. Cecilia could not but wonder, yet did not repine.

Just as breakfast was over, and Mr. and Mrs. Delvile and Cecilia were preparing to depart, to their no little surprise, the door was opened, and, out of breath with haste and with heat, in stumpt Mr. Briggs! "So," cried he to Cecilia, "what's all this? hay?—where are going?—a coach at the door! horses to every wheel! servants fine as lords! what's in the wind now? think to chouse me out of my belongings?"

"I thought, sir," said Cecilia, who instantly understood him, though Mr. and Mrs. Delvile stared at him in utter astonishment, "I had explained before I left you that I should not return."

"Did n't, did n't!" answered he, angrily; "waited for you three days, dressed a breast o' mutton o' purpose; got in a lobster, and two crabs; all spoilt by keeping; stink already; weather quite muggy, forced to souse 'em in vinegar; one expense brings on another; never begin the like agen."[1]

"I am very sorry, indeed," said Cecilia, much disconcerted, "if there has been any mistake through my neglect; but I had hoped I was understood, and I have been so much occupied—"

"Ay, ay," interrupted he, "fine work! rare doings! a

[1] "'What disputes, too,' said Mrs. Chapone, 'there are about Briggs. I was in a room some time ago where somebody said there could be no such character; and a poor little mean city man, who was there, started up and said, 'But there is though, for I'se one myself!'"—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, p. 257, vol. ii.

merry Vauxhalling, with pistols at all your noddles! thought as much! thought he'd tip the perch; saw he was n't stanch; knew he'd go by his company,—a set of jackanapes! all black-legs! nobody warm among 'em: fellows with a month's good living upon their backs, and not sixpence for the hangman in their pockets!"

Mrs. Delvile, now, with a look of arch congratulation at Cecilia as the object of this agreeable visit, finding it not likely to be immediately concluded, returned to her chair: but Mr. Delvile, leaning sternly upon his cane, moved not from the spot where he stood at his entrance, but surveyed him from head to foot, with the most astonishing contempt at his undaunted vulgarity.

"Well, I'd all your cash myself; seized that else!—run out the constable for you, next, and made you blow out your brains for company. Mind what I say, never give your mind to a gold laced hat! many a-one wears it don't know five farthings from two-pence. A good man always wears a bob wig; make that your rule. Ever see Master Harrel wear such a thing? No, I'll warrant! Better if he had kept his head on his own shoulders. And now, pray, how does he cut up? what has he left behind him? a *twey*-case,[1] I suppose, and a bit of a hat won't go on a man's head!"

Cecilia, perceiving, with great confusion, that Mr. Delvile, though evidently provoked by this intrusion, would not deign to speak, that Mr. Briggs might be regarded as belonging wholly to herself, hastily said, "I will not, sir, as your time is precious, detain you here, but, as soon as it is in my power, I will wait upon you in the city."

Mr. Briggs, however, without listening to her, thought proper to continue his harangue.

"Invited me once to his house; sent me a card, half of it printed like a book! t'other half a scrawl could not read; pretended to give a supper; all a mere bam; went without my dinner, and got nothing to eat; all glass and show; victuals painted all manner o' colours; lighted up like a pastry-cook on twelfth-day; wanted something solid, and

[1] An *étui* is a closely fitting case for anything, from a hat down to needles. A gentleman's "*twey-case*" was most likely a narrow, oblong, pocket-case, containing a little mirror, tweezers, and so forth.

got a great lump of sweatmeat; found it as cold as a stone, all froze in my mouth like ice; made me jump again, and brought the tears in my eyes; forced to spit it out; believe it was nothing but a snow-ball, just set up for show, and covered over with a little sugar. Pretty way to spend money! Stuffing, and piping, and hopping! never could rest till every farthing was gone; nothing left but his own fool's pate, and even that he could not hold together."

"At present, sir," said Cecilia, "we are all going out of town; the carriage is waiting at the door, and therefore——"

"No such thing," cried he; "Sha'n't go; come for you myself; take you to my own house. Got everything ready, been to the broker's, bought a nice blanket, hardly a brack[1] in it. Pick up a table soon; one in my eye."

"I am sorry you have so totally mistaken me, sir; for I am now going into the country with Mr. and Mrs. Delvile."

"Won't consent, won't consent! what will you go there for? hear of nothing but dead dukes; as well visit an old tomb."

Here Mr. Delvile, who felt himself insulted in a manner he could least support, after looking at him very disdainfully, turned to Cecilia, and said "Miss Beverley, if this person wishes for a longer conference with you, I am sorry you did not appoint a more seasonable hour for your interview."

"Ay, ay," cried the impenetrable Mr. Briggs; "want to hurry her off! see that! But t'won't do; a'n't to be nicked; choose to come in for my thirds; won't be gulled, shan't have more than your share."

"Sir!" cried Mr. Delvile, with a look meant to be nothing less than petrific.

"What!" cried he, with an arch leer; "all above it, hay? warrant your Spanish Don never thinks of such a thing! don't believe 'em, my duck! great cry and little wool; no more of the ready than other folks; mere puff and go one."

"This is language, sir," said Mr. Delvile, "so utterly

[1] "A brack," a fault, or flaw.

incomprehensible, that I presume you do not even intend it should be understood; otherwise, I should very little scruple to inform you, that no man of the name of Delvile brooks the smallest insinuation of dishonour."

"Don't he?" returned Mr. Briggs, with a grin; "why how will he help it? will the old grandees jump up out of their graves to frighten us?"

"What old grandees, sir? to whom are you pleased to allude?"

"Why all them old grandfathers and aunts you brag of; a set of poor souls you won't let rest in their coffins; mere clay and dirt! fine things to be proud of! a parcel of old mouldy rubbish quite departed this life! raking up bones and dust, nobody knows for what! ought to be ashamed; who cares for dead carcases? nothing but carrion. My little Tom's worth forty of 'em."

"I can so ill make out, Miss Beverley," said the astonished Mr. Delvile, "what this person is pleased to dive at, that I cannot pretend to enter into any sort of conversation with him; you will therefore be so good as to let me know when he has finished his discourse, and you are at leisure to set off."

And then, with a very stately air, he was quitting the room; but was soon stopt, upon Mr. Briggs' calling out "Ay, ay, Don Duke, poke in the old charnel houses by yourself, none of your defunct for me! did n't care if they were hung in a string. Who's the better for 'em?"

"Pray, sir," cried Mr. Delvile, turning round, "to whom were you pleased to address that speech?"

"To one Don Puffendorff," replied Mr. Briggs; "know ever such a person, hay?"

"Don who? Sir!" said Mr. Delvile, stalking nearer to him, "I must trouble you to say that name over again."

"Suppose don't choose it? how then?"

"I am to blame," said Mr. Delvile, scornfully waving his hand with a repulsive motion, "to suffer myself to be irritated so unworthily; and I am sorry, in my own house, to be compelled to hint that the sooner I have it to myself the better I shall be contented with it."

"Ay, ay, want to get me off; want to have her to yourself! won't be so soon choused; who's the better man?

hay? which do you think is warmest? and all got by myself; obliged to never a grandee for a penny; what do you say to that? will you cast an account with me?"

"Very extraordinary this!" cried Mr. Delvile; "the most extraordinary circumstance of the kind I ever met with! a person to enter my house in order to talk in this incomprehensible manner! a person, too, I hardly know by sight!"

"Never mind, old Don," cried Briggs, with a facetious nod, "know me better another time!"[1]

"Old who, sir!—what!"

"Come to a fair reckoning," continued Mr. Briggs; "suppose you were in my case, and had never a farthing but of your own getting; where would you be then? What would become of your fine coach and horses? you might stump your feet off before you'd ever get into one. Where would be all this smart crockery work for your breakfast? you might pop your head under a pump, or drink out of your own paw. What would you do for that fine jemmy tye? Where would you get a gold head to your stick? You might dig long enough in them cold vaults, before any of your old grandfathers would pop out to give you one."

Mr. Delvile, feeling more enraged than he thought suitable to his dignity, restrained himself from making any farther answer, but going up to the bell, rang it with great violence.

"And as to ringing a bell," continued Mr. Briggs, "you'd never know what it was in your life, unless could make interest to be a dust-man."

"A dust-man!"—repeated Mr. Delvile, unable to command his silence longer, "I protest—" and biting his lips, he stopt short.

"Ay, love it, don't you? suits your taste; why not one dust as well as another? Dust in a cart good as dust of a charnel house; don't smell half so bad."

A servant now entering, Mr. Delvile called out, "Is every thing ready?"

[1] "Even Mr. Briggs, *caricato* as he certainly is, won all my esteem by his scene with Don Puffendorff, whose misty magnitude was never shewn so despicably dropsical before. I was happy to see Briggs have the better of him."—*Mrs. Thrale to Miss Burney*, 1782.—*Diary*, vol. ii. p. 139.

"Yes, sir."

He then begged Mrs. Delvile to go into the coach, and telling Cecilia to follow when at leisure, left the room.

"I will come immediately, sir," said Cecilia. "Mr. Briggs, I am sorry to leave you, and much concerned you have had this trouble; but I can detain Mr. Delvile no longer."

And then away she ran, notwithstanding he repeatedly charged her to stay. He followed them, however, to the coach, with bitter revilings that every body was to make more of his ward than himself, and with the most virulent complaints of his losses from the blanket, the breast of mutton, the crabs and the lobster!

Nothing, however, more was said to him; Cecilia, as if she had not heard him, only bowed her head, and the coach driving off, they soon lost sight of him.

This incident by no means rendered the journey pleasant, or Mr. Delvile gracious: his own dignity, that constant object of his thoughts and his cares, had received a wound from this attack which he had not the sense to despise; and the vulgarity and impudence of Mr. Briggs, which ought to have made his familiarity and boldness equally contemptible and ridiculous, served only, with a man whose pride out-run his understanding, to render them doubly mortifying and stinging. He could talk, therefore, of nothing the whole way that they went, but the extreme impropriety of which the Dean of ——— had been guilty, in exposing him to scenes and situations so much beneath his rank, by leaguing him with a *person* so coarse and disgraceful.

They slept one night upon the road, and arrived the next day at Delvile Castle.

END OF VOL. I.

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